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BOOKS ISSUE

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MARY SUMMERS

ARTHUR MILLER LEFT & CENTER
JAMES LARDNER

ROBERT KUTTNER'S CURE
DOUG HENWOOD

THE LONG ADOLESCENCE OF SYLVIA PLATH
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REWRITING NEW YORK
JOHN LEONARD

WHO IS JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN?
MARILYN HACKER

ISMAIL KADARE'S CHRONICLE IN STONE
EVAN EISENBERG

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LETTERS.

BRAINWASH WHITEWASH

New York City

On October 24 *The Nation* published a "Follow-up" about the Federal Bureau of Prisons' High Security Unit at Lexington, Kentucky, where five women have been the subject of a deliberate experiment in psychological torture for the past year. Such were the conclusions reached by a leading correctional psychologist, Richard Korn, in a report on the H.S.U. done by the American Civil Liberties Union's National Prison Project. Korn wrote that the "experiment being conducted in the HSU at Lexington" is an attempt to alter political views "at all costs," by achieving the following objective: "to reduce prisoners to the state of submission essential for their ideological conversion." Korn noted a "final objective" should that and others fail: "The only alternative is to destroy them, preferably by making them desperate enough to destroy themselves."

These objectives are deadly serious. On October 20-21, I visited with three of the H.S.U.'s five residents and observed the painfully visible signs of stress caused by their interminable isolation, surrounded (and observed) constantly only by people who wish for their destruction. (One other prisoner was transferred to the prison hospital on October 21 due to her deteriorating physical condition.) Despite reports that the unit will be closed, the women have been told that they are not going anywhere.

You report that Bureau of Prisons director J. Michael Quinlan "agreed" on October 5 to "improve conditions" for the women of Lexington until the unit closes. I recently received a letter from Quinlan, dated October 21, which belies any such intention. He states: "It is our staff's firm determination that this Unit is operated in a safe, secure and humane fashion." Such a statement makes a mockery of his promises. Quinlan's correspondence has always referred to the "mission" of Lexington, and this latest letter is no exception. He promises that this "mission" will continue until it is transferred to a different unit (now under construction, he says, in Marianna, Florida). I believe Korn has identified that mission clearly and it is one which all of us must reject and resist.

The intolerable conditions described in the National Prison Project report on Lexington have not been and, indeed, cannot be improved in any fundamental sense. Social visits would, of course, help relieve the unrelenting tension of isolation underground, but the women have been told by local officials that they will not be permitted social visits. In fact, local officials seem to delight in mocking any slim hopes created by the discussions between Quinlan and National Prison Project personnel. An example: H.S.U. policy which limited each woman to five books was to be "reviewed"; ever since, the prison has rejected clearly marked shipments of all books. In fact, the A.C.L.U. conducted a follow-up visit to the unit on November 5 and found that the prison conditions had, if anything, worsened and that the women's psychological health had deteriorated further.

If the Bureau of Prisons thinks it is "safe, secure and humane" to subject these women to the conditions of psychological torture they have experienced over the past months in an attempt to reform unacceptable political views, then one wonders what other "missions" Washington has in mind for those who disagree with its policies. This is the language of fascism, nothing less.

People should write now to Representative Robert Kastenmeier and to B.O.P. director Quinlan to demand that the Lexington women be immediately transferred back into the general prison population and an end to psychological torture control units wherever else they may be located. *Mary K. O'Melveny*

IRISH APARTHEID

Thousand Oaks, Calif.

While Sally Belfrage's comments on Northern Ireland ["In Belfast, War Is a Way of Life," Aug. 29] were thoughtful, she reflects the confusion that many journalists experience in trying to understand the conflict.

She suggests that a comparison with South Africa is invalid because there are "trappings of a free society" and less poverty in Northern Ireland. The fact is that the facade of democracy was intended precisely to mislead outsiders. Half the counties forced into the Northern Ireland state in 1922 had Irish nationalist majorities opposed to the move, but this allowed Britain to hold the largest piece of land possible with an artificially created Loyalist (Protestant) majority. This was kept intact by forcing the mostly Catholic nationalists to emigrate (because of lack of jobs or by burning down their neighborhoods) and disenfranchising the remainder through gerrymandering and voting requirements (the vote was linked to property until 1974; now identification qualifications discriminate). The repression is legendary: At one point, South Africa's Prime Minister said he wished he had the draconian powers of his counterpart in Northern Ireland. Apartheid does exist against Catholics, who are discriminated against at every level. Loyalists are the ones who make the comparison with Afrikaners; both see themselves as defenders of civilization against the barbarians.

I am amazed that Belfrage asserts that nationalists virtually ignore the misguided fears of Protestants about religious and civil rights in a reunited Ireland. On the contrary, the antisectarianism of the Republican movement is well known (it was founded by Protestants), and its basic tenets are liberty and equality for everyone. These "fears" are red herrings used to throw off journalists from looking at the right-wing "racial" and religious bigotry of Loyalism. To defang such concerns, one only need ask Protestants now living in the Republic how they fare. Northern Protestant leaders admit a change in the Republic's divorce law would not alter their antireunification stance, and they know that a majority favor reform (the most recent referendum was defeated because the proposal did not protect the rights of women). Even more astounding is Belfrage's equating of the fears of Catholics about their status in an independent Ulster with Protestant concerns about a reunited Ireland. Given the fascist record of Loyalism, Catholics have every justification to dread a move to an independent state. A pogrom would likely result, whereas the paranoid fantasies of the Rev. Ian Paisley's crowd would not be realized in a reunited state. Loyalist violence would wither when the benign reality was experienced.

Belfrage trivializes and misinterprets the reasons for support for the Irish Republican Army and is absolutely wrong that most Republicans do not want peace. They will not, however, settle for peace at any price. Only when Britain leaves its first colony will a just and lasting peace be achieved in Ireland. *Scott Smith*

BELFRAGE REPLIES

London

Unfortunately, *The Nation*'s editors, not I, so cut the final chapter of my book *Living With War: A Belfast Year* that the resulting excerpt presented the case I had in mind to make but left out half the evidence. Many of the points disputed by Scott Smith are covered in detail not only in the body of the book itself but also in the full version of the truncated chapter.

The discussion about Northern Ireland is one in which everyone has something relatively legitimate to say within his or her own context. Smith is unfamiliar with any but one of these and, to judge by his factual inaccuracies, not wholly versed in that one. I would hope he has the patience to read what I actually wrote and that he might also consider the possibility that Protestant poverty isn't very different from Catholic poverty. For many on each side, a nationalist dream is one of the few ways out. But how many still sustain the dream? The fact is that "support for the Irish Republican Army," if the Sinn Fein vote is any measure, amounted to, at last count, 11.8 percent of the population of the North. Since Smith seems to believe that Catholics are still disenfranchised, maybe he would credit a *Belfast Telegraph* poll that had only 21.2 percent of Catholics supporting a united Ireland. Few dispute that the British troops do not belong there, but the "Let's you and them fight" stance of some Irish-Americans profits nobody but the undertakers of Northern Ireland. *Sally Belfrage*

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EDITORIALS.

Muffled Report

"We believe it is time for Congress to put the Iran/*contra* affair behind us," Daniel Inouye, the chair of the Senate Iran/*contra* committee, said last week when the final report was released. It was a call for a return to normalcy. But the sordid episode was not an aberration; it was only the latest manifestation of what Richard Falk called at a recent Nation Institute–American Civil Liberties Union forum the "breakdown of constitutionalism" of the secret government, linking Vietnam, Watergate, the C.I.A. scandals of the mid-1970s and Lieut. Col. Oliver North's covert crusades.

To be fair, the committees have published a report that is far better than the hearings they conducted. In cold print, they do not cower before North. They assail the Administration's "secrecy, deception and disdain for the law" and lambaste Reagan for encouraging unconstitutional activity.

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Their prescriptions for remedying the evils they describe are not as bold, however. They look forward to the day when Congress and the White House can, in good faith, craft a bipartisan foreign policy. They do not acknowledge that it was the desire of legislative Democrats to work with the White House on the *contra* program that allowed the Administration to snooker Congress and get away with murder—literally. They ask that the process by which the United States conducts its covert operations, already fine-tuned in response to past abuses, be tinkered with some more. They do not face the dilemma at the heart of the Iran/*contra* scandal: Can a democracy engage in undercover activities without sacrificing its essential values?

Fundamental questions regarding the aims of U.S. foreign policy and how they are to be achieved—as well as what to do about a President who lets the Constitution be violated during his watch—are now left to the body politic. Instead of consigning the affair to history's slow shredder, Democrats, specifically those seeking to reclaim the White House, should confront the underlying constitutional and policy issues raised but not addressed by the report.

Arms and the Ban

Last week, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski tossed out some fresh ideas on conventional arms control. Just back from Moscow and presumably with General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's backing, he announced that Warsaw Pact leaders are prepared to negotiate reductions in tank strength in return for cuts in NATO's bomber power. Jaruzelski pledged that Poland, which commands the second-largest conventional force in the Warsaw Pact after the Soviet Union, is "ready to reduce or to eliminate the asymmetry in conventional forces where it can be shown to exist." Western critics of the intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty who complained about the Soviet Union's alleged superiority in conventional forces in Europe, and who make their approval of the nuclear pact contingent on cuts in those forces, are presented with a bold new initiative.

Resistance to the implications of Jaruzelski's proposal and to the imminent I.N.F. agreement emerged last week not in Washington but in Prague. In a speech to the Czechoslovak Parliament, Foreign Minister Bohulsav Chnoupek acknowledged that some groups in his country's leadership view Gorbachev's arms control proposals as a threat to the basic interests of Communist rule. Gustav Husak's conservative regime, which came to power after a Soviet-led invasion in 1968, may find the prospect of rapid disarmament unsettling.

Gorbachev, who has allied himself with Eastern European reformers like Jaruzelski, has shied away from imposing on Eastern European conservatives his party line—*glasnost*, democratization and economic restructuring. But does Gorbachev's polycentrist approach to Soviet-Eastern European relations allow opposition within the Warsaw Pact to disarmament and arms control agreements with the West?

Jaruzelski's proposal provides an opportunity for re-examining the out-of-date orthodoxies of arms control arithmetic. As he explained, conventional arms talks are currently bogged down in "the statistical aspects of the problem." On this point, a sliver of potential common ground between East and West appeared last week when the influential International Institute for Strategic Studies in London announced that it had radically altered its traditional method of assessing the balance of conventional forces in Europe. In the 1987-88 edition of its publication, *The Military Balance*, the institute states that its past figures have been "misrepresented" and that "political leaders, East and West, sometimes use assessments of the 'balance' selectively to rally public support for their foreign and defense policies." The institute points out that "no single approach is likely to prove useful for all purposes. Indeed, it is a misnomer to speak of a single, overall 'balance.'"

Since East and West both rely on the institute's figures, the new approach could provide a better basis for future negotiations. After thirteen years of sterile mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna, flexibility is badly needed. Jaruzelski's offer and the institute's nonformulaic force assessments are positive steps, and the West should respond with some fresh ideas of its own.

Bush's Covenants

"Somehow it seems fundamental that a man should not have a door slammed in his face because he is a Negro." With those words then-Representative George Bush explained to his hometown Texas audience why he had disregarded local opinion in voting for the Fair Housing Act in 1968. But somehow the issue didn't seem so fundamental to Bush in his private life. Real estate records in Houston and Midland, Texas, reveal that from 1955 to 1966 George and Barbara Bush owned property that could not be sold or rented to "Negroes" and other nonwhites because this was banned by restrictive covenants.

Such restrictions were common in Texas and much of the rest of the country from the 1940s through the early 1960s. Although in 1948 the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that these covenants were legally unenforceable, according to Clarence Laws, Southwest regional director for the N.A.A.C.P. from 1957 to 1965, "restrictive racial covenants were still being enforced in Texas in the 1950s and early 1960s." In fact, they were so common in Houston's Harris County that in 1986 the Justice Department forced the County Clerk to include a disclaimer on every real estate record certified by the county stating that such covenants were "invalid and unenforceable under Federal Law."

In 1953, the developers of an upscale tract in Midland, wishing to "enhance the value and desirability" of their properties, stipulated that none of the ninety-three lots could be "used or conveyed to any Negro or person of African descent." One of those lots, 2703 Sentinel Avenue, was bought two years later by George and Barbara Bush. They

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lived there until 1959, when they moved to Houston. There they bought a lot in the Broad Oaks housing development at 5525 Briar Drive. Since 1941 the subdivision had carried restrictions against lots being "sold, leased or rented to, or occupied by, any person other than the Caucasian race."

When asked about the restrictive covenants, the Vice President's acting press secretary, Stephen Hart, said, "There's really nothing to this," and that Bush "said he doesn't recall any such covenants." However, according to attorney Marvin Nathan, who served in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department from 1966 to 1968 and is now a real estate lawyer in Houston, although "Broad Oaks was not the most elite area at the time, certainly people would have known as a matter of common knowledge that there were race restrictions and taken some comfort in that." Usually a real estate lawyer or broker would not inform his clients of restrictions on property they were considering, but the Bushes were the first to build on their lots and therefore might have examined the restrictions. Some people wouldn't have bought property "if it didn't have those restrictions," Nathan added. In other cases, according to Clarence Laws, "a white might front for a black family to help them buy a home." However, in those cases, racist harassment frequently served to keep neighborhoods segregated. The Bush family's old neighborhood in Midland has remained all white to this day.

Bush is not the first public figure to face questions about racial restrictions on property he owned. In 1984 *The Nation* revealed that Ronald Reagan and his first wife, Jane Wyman, bought land in Beverly Hills that carried restrictive covenants and that they later extended those restrictions to adjoining parcels, two of which they bought [see Richard Ryan and Elsa Dixler, "Reagan's Racial Covenant," October 13, 1984]. Last year, during the Senate confirmation hearings of Justice William Rehnquist, it was discovered that Rehnquist had owned homes in Vermont and Arizona that carried restrictive covenants. Both Reagan and Rehnquist denied any knowledge of the covenants.

When he announced his candidacy in October, Bush called for a "new harmony" in race relations and denounced "the tired old baggage of bigotry." But during his first, unsuccessful, campaign for public office, against Senator Ralph Yarborough, Bush came out against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. At the time, he was living in the still lily-white neighborhood of Broad Oaks.

"I oppose the Civil Rights Bill," Bush said in his campaign literature, "on the grounds that it transcends civil rights and violates many other rights of all people. Job opportunities, education and fair play will help alleviate inequities and should be encouraged. Sweeping Federal legislation will fail. Texas has a responsible record in this field, and Texas is capable of solving its own problems in this difficult area." That position didn't endear Bush to black voters. For example, he managed to get only fourteen votes to Yarborough's 1,697 in the overwhelmingly black 247th precinct in Houston.

Bush won a House seat in 1966 despite another poor showing in the black precincts. In his autobiography, *Looking Forward*, Bush expresses disappointment at his inability to "break the Democratic Party's grip on black voters," a goal he says he had talked about with "local black leaders" and with a "longtime friend . . . who chaired the United Negro College Fund when I headed the UNCF drive on the Yale campus in 1948." But there was no U.N.C.F. chapter at Yale for Bush to head in 1948. In 1946 and 1947, Bush was an officer of Yale's Annual Budget Drive, a charity project. Based on a poll of the student body, 18 percent of the drive's $25,000 goal was earmarked for the United Negro College Fund. Moreover, the national office of the U.N.C.F. says its archives show no record of Bush's involvement with its work during his time at Yale. When asked about Bush's claim in the book, acting press secretary Hart repeated the assertion that "Bush headed up the drive for the U.N.C.F." Fifty percent of the proceeds of the autobiography, he added, will be donated to that group.

Bush has been called a "résumé candidate" because of his extensive experience in government. But there is a shadowy side to that résumé with regard to civil rights. The fact that he owned property with racial restrictions, took opposing positions on civil rights legislation and in retrospect may be magnifying his work on behalf of blacks suggests that the record should be further probed. For example, did hiring practices at the oil company he founded vary much from the industry norm of wholesale discrimination? The evidence thus far shows that George Bush is carrying some tired old baggage of bigotry of his own. DAVID ROBB

David Robb is a writer based in Los Angeles. He wishes to thank Micah Sifry and Vania Del Borgo for their research assistance.

I.F. STONE REPORTS: On the Yeltsin Affair

A half-page editorial in *Pravda* for November 16, blasting democratization, reinforces my own hunch that Gorbachev was cut down by Politburo member Yegor Ligachev and the neo-Stalinists at a secret showdown during that mysterious "vacation." Hence, his muted November 2 speech. We are told he asked Moscow party leader Boris Yeltsin not to risk a crisis until after the November 7 holiday. What Yeltsin actually told the Central Committee on October 21 is kept secret, Stalinist style. We read only the vilifications and "confession," as in the show trials of the Old Bolsheviks. *Glasnost* is turning to glaze. But no angry crowds take to the streets as in 1905 or 1917. Seventy years of a police state have turned a once-spirited people numb. Or, as the party hacks like to say, "even more unanimous."

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Soviet New Left

More socialism, and therefore more democracy!
–Len Karpinsky, Moscow News, *March 1, 1987*

Moscow

We are in the days between Gorbachev's speech to the Central Committee on November 2 and the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, November 7. Moscow presents ironies at levels both petty and majestic. Strolling through the National Hotel on Red Square, I am astounded to see Vanessa Redgrave loping along beside the squat, toad-like form of Gerry Healy, one of the most rabid Trotskyist sectarians in Britain. I meet a bemused writer the next day who reports that Redgrave has given a speech to his union, concluding with the cry, "All power to the soviets!"

Muscovites cluster round the latest issue of *Moscow News*, which carries an article by Andrei Sakharov praising the film *Risk*, which criticizes Stalin's role in the war. Sakharov concludes with a vigorous endorsement of Gorbachev: "We understand the colossal burden of the sense of responsibility and the realization of the historic role that is shouldered by Gorbachev and his comrades in arms. But then, we all shoulder this responsibility."

People are prowling through the text of Gorbachev's speech. What about Trotsky? What about Bukharin? There are some new emphases, such as Gorbachev's kind words for the revolution of February 1917: "The February revolution had been the first experience of real democracy, of political education of the masses through an experience acquired in the intricate conditions of dual power. The February revolution was unique in that it provided an opportunity for power to be taken over peacefully by the working people—something which, regrettably, did not finally come about owing to historical circumstances. . . ."

The Yeltsin affair is on every lip. The Moscow party leader's attack on the enemies of reform, identified with Egor Ligachev, and on the cult of personality, implicitly Gorbachev, is seen as rash, even politically maladroit. Yet if he fell, would it be a signal that Gorbachev could not look after his own? Even so, no Muscovite would proffer the notion, later bruited in the Western press, that Yeltsin's disgrace would augur a return to the period of the purges.

Down in a square with a statue of an old czarist general whose plinth is freshly garlanded with flowers from Pamyat ("Memory"), the far-right nationalist, anti-Semitic group, I walk, talking with Boris Kagarlitsky about the present situation and the regeneration of socialism in the Soviet Union.

Between August 20 and 23, in a hall provided by officials of the Moscow branch of the Communist Party, a conference of independent left-wing reformers was held, the first such meeting to be sanctioned in more than fifty years. It brought together about 600 representatives of fifty ecological, cultural and grass-roots socialist groups. The proceedings were tumultuous, and at the end various associations emerged, among them the Federation of Socialist Clubs. Its core bodies, essentially formulating concepts and strategy, are the Club of Social Initiatives (C.S.I.); Obshchina, a student group; and a youth club called the Forest Folk (historians of left youth groupings in the West may recall here the Woodcraft Folk, radical analogue to the Boy Scouts). Also under the federation's umbrella are such clusters as the Young Communard Internationalists, the Che Guevara Brigade and Red Sails.

Kagarlitsky is a 29-year-old sociologist and one of the leading activists in the C.S.I. He was jailed in 1982 for advancing Eurocommunist notions and was released thirteen months later, under Andropov. His father is an expert on Kipling and Wells, and Boris speaks English fluently. He described with some amusement to me his own experience with Pamyat. His maternal grandfather had been sent into internal exile in Archangel in the 1930s, having previously been a keeper of national monuments. He survived, returned to Moscow and in recent years, because of his role in tending the religious shrines of the past, was invited to attend a meeting of Pamyat. But he brought along his grandson Boris, whose father is Jewish, and owing to the resultant discomposure and surprise, the Kagarlitsky grandfather and grandson were never invited again.

In Kagarlitsky's analysis and cultural outlook one hears the tones—novel, precarious and hopefully portentous—of the emergent socialist revival in the Soviet Union.

AC: *What did you think of Gorbachev's speech?*

BK: It was disappointing. People were waiting for more on Bukharin and something positive about Trotsky. Without saying something about Trotsky's participation in the establishment of Soviet power and the Red Army, you can't have a real history, which is very important in a country where people are crazy about history and are eager to get the empty parts of the past filled in. Trotsky is treated as a criminal for saying something about the peasantry that was really wrong, but Stalin is not treated as a criminal for putting the same outlook into actual practice. The solution should be to say, Trotsky made a lot of mistakes, but Stalin was a criminal. But we have the reverse situation. Another thing, there's an anti-Semitic campaign that says Trotsky was responsible for all the evils in Soviet history. It would have been important if Gorbachev had said something to counter the anti-Semitic arguments of such fascist groups as Pamyat. There was one favorable mention of Bukharin, but all the major criticisms of him resurfaced in the speech. All the same, you mustn't say that it was a Gorbachev speech. It was a speech of the Central Committee delivered by Gorbachev. There had been many versions, but the final one was dominated by conservative thinking.

AC: *What is the emphasis of official reform?*

BK: The big issue involves rewriting the party history. What does this mean? It means rewriting ideology, because in the Soviet Union history is ideology, and ideology is history. So there's a lot of struggle inside the group now preparing the party history. The Stalinists say, You are destabilizing the system by saying the truth about Stalin or about Trotsky

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or about Bukharin. Saying the truth about Bukharin means saying the truth about the real nature of collectivization.

AC: *Could you draw a politico-intellectual map of what is going on?*

BK: One current that is gaining ground now is the neo-Stalinist one. It's a very real danger that under *perestroika* Stalinism is becoming much more popular than it was under Brezhnev. Stalinists are trying to become populists. Traditional Stalinism was simply manipulation of the people by bureaucratic means, and propaganda was simply a matter of explaining orders to the people. Now hard-line Stalinism, for the first time in its history, is trying to conquer the hearts and minds of the people.

AC: *What is hard-line Stalinism today as a political project?*

BK: The Stalinist project states, first, We must re-establish the initial values of the system, not liberalize it, not change it, not democratize it, but recognize that the only way to solve our problems now is to turn back to the initial stage of the system, of the thirties, to restore the same structures and the same mode of operating inside the structures. Second, as one Stalinist author wrote, We need a whip. That is, to make functionaries and workers more productive, democratic elements in the system should not be nurtured; per contra, some kind of moral terror should be established. Their economic project is simply to limit consumption, to destroy Western patterns of consumption, thus to free up resources for the second industrialization, which means scientific breakthroughs with computers and so forth. What is interesting is that, psychologically and ideologically, these Stalinists have a lot in common with Reagan's neoconservatives. They're always talking about national pride, traditional values, moral climate, while at the same time urging struggle against subversive external influences, liberal tendencies of an allegedly counterproductive nature. So, psychologically, neo-Stalinism is more like Reaganaut neoconservatism than like old-fashioned Stalinism. Now, that kind of propaganda is very efficient—not among the youth but among the older age groups.

AC: *That's a strong intellectual current?*

BK: You can't find too many self-respecting intellectuals in this camp, but you do find these ideas at the popular level. Then there is a liberal, Westernizing current, which, naturally, is better than neo-Stalinism but, all the same, is rather out of touch with reality. Its adherents want to copy Western modes of management, thinking, behavior, without considering how ordinary people would react. They don't think about traditional Russian or Soviet culture. Not ideology but culture. Russian culture is not consumer oriented or profit oriented. Even Russian capitalism was inefficient because the capitalists were always more interested in the moral influence they could have on the workers than in the simple business of profit.

Then there is a current called cultural democracy. Those of this mind say they aren't interested in capitalism or socialism. They say, That's not our problem. They say they want free culture; under which system is a matter of indifference.

AC: *They don't think about the relations of production?*

BK: Not at all. It's a kind of historical liberalism. There's also a current—weakening—of liberal Communism of the Twentieth Party Congress genre, which is simply trying to say once again everything said during the Khrushchev period. It's influential among people in their 60s, for whom the Khrushchev period was very important, their shining hour. It has absolutely no influence on youth. There's also a growing nationalist tendency. It's not 100 percent Stalinist, but there is a de facto alliance between the two.

AC: *You're talking about Pamyat?*

BK: They're anti-Semitic, saying the Jews are responsible for things that go wrong, force them to pay and so on; but the most important thing is that it is based on some feeling of frustration, especially among the petty bureaucracy—engineers, bureaucrats who are underpaid but not qualified for raises. They don't want competition, especially with Jews.

AC: *As Bebel said, anti-Semitism is the socialism of the fools.*

BK: There are a lot of people thinking like that.

AC: *You're 29. What was formative for your generation—people from 25 to 34, say?*

BK: What was very important for my generation was the failure of "official dissent," meaning the dissident movement of the sixties and seventies. It failed not only to change anything but also to establish any kind of ideological alternative. People ended up just saying that in principle you can't do everything in this country, so the only thing you can do is criticize it, for reasons of pure criticism—which means recognizing that you are a complete failure politically. They tried to formulate their views using the same modes of thinking as those used in the Stalinist textbooks. They were as intolerant as the Stalinists. It became clear that this wasn't the way forward. If you read dissident materials, you can find a lot of inverted Stalinists. For example, Stalinists say socialism is what exists in the Soviet Union now; the dissidents said the same thing. No democratic socialism is possible, say the Stalinists. Agreed completely, said the dissidents. So on theoretical points the dissidents agreed 100 percent with the Stalinists. They simply changed plus to minus, "good" to "bad." When Solzhenitsyn wanted to criticize Western left-wingers, he always quoted Stalin. When he wanted to formulate views on the Russian Revolution, he always quoted Stalin as the final authority. After studying that we said, Something is wrong not only with the Brezhnevite system but with the modes of thinking that prevailed in that system. So an alternative had to be discovered. We began to study Marx and Lenin, and other thinkers like Bukharin. Some people were interested in the role of Trotsky. People suddenly came upon the Gramscian tradition and discovered that there is a whole culture of the Western left, as well as Eastern European reformism. That was the first stage, which came about ten years ago. Now the problem is not to copy Western models of thinking and acting but to find out the Russian way of being a left-winger.

(*To be continued next week*)

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN
JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Cave-In at the Committee

From a staff member on the House Iran/*contra* committee comes this post-mortem: "We missed so much and then got burnt out. I'm discouraged." After the hearings ended, he said, his own efforts to pursue various trails were hindered. "I'd talk to our lawyers about taking a deposition and they would look at me like I'm cross-eyed." This Democratic aide credited the Republican side with outmaneuvering the Democrats. "From day one they were trying to frustrate and obstruct the investigation," he said. Their methods included insisting on time-devouring security clearances and objecting to various subpoenas and depositions. Representative Lee Hamilton, chair of the House panel, and other Democrats were unwilling to use their majority status and play hardball with the Republicans, he added. "Hamilton," he said, "doesn't like confrontations."

■ Glossary: 'Humanitarian Aid'

As *contra* supporters in Congress seek so-called humanitarian aid for the rebels, the leaders of seven truly humanitarian organizations have objected to the Orwellian use of the word "humanitarian." In a letter to House Speaker Jim Wright, the groups declared, "Internationally agreed-upon definitions of humanitarian aid, as well as U.S. custom and tradition, recognize the right to such assistance only for civilians and non-combatants. . . . Assistance to any combat force, even if restricted to food, clothing, and medicine does not meet the criteria." The organizations, including Oxfam America, Catholic Relief Services and Save the Children, asked that any future aid labeled humanitarian be channeled via established international agencies.

■ Secord's Defense Secretary

Richard Secord, no doubt, is among all those applauding Frank Carlucci's nomination as Secretary of Defense. Carlucci rescued him from disgrace in the early 1980s. Secord, a former Air Force major general, and two former top-ranking C.I.A. officials were linked to a Middle East trading company that had bilked the Pentagon out of at least $8 million, according to Peter Maas in *Manhunt*. While the Justice Department investigated, Secord left his Pentagon position rather than take a polygraph test. Carlucci, as Deputy Secretary of Defense, then suddenly reinstated Secord. One of the former C.I.A. officials, Thomas Clines, plea-bargained in the case brought against him and paid $110,000 in fines. Secord and the other former official, Theodore Shackley, were never prosecuted. All three went on to play key roles in the Iran/*contra* operation. Carlucci's intervention on Secord's behalf went unexamined by the Senate Armed Services Committee in its public confirmation hearings.

■ Reagan's South African Sieve

Despite the sanctions imposed on South Africa by Congress last year, more than $130 million in embargoed goods from the apartheid regime have flowed into the United States this year. These included, in the first six months alone, $59.4 million worth of iron and steel products. The A.F.L.-C.I.O., which advocates tougher sanctions, discovered the imports through an analysis of Commerce Department figures. In testimony before the House Subcommittee on Africa, Thomas Donahue, the federation's secretary/treasurer, said, "The law provides penalties of fines and imprisonment for those willfully violating the ban. To date, no criminal or civil penalties have been assessed."

The Customs Service, which is supposed to enforce the import ban, has not yet caught any culprits, according to a recent General Accounting Office report. The G.A.O. study stated that Customs "has not received additional resources for the act's enforcement, and it has competing higher priority enforcement activities."

The A.F.L.-C.I.O.'s revelations come as Congress is evaluating the impact of the limited sanctions imposed last year and beginning debate on further steps. Early next year the House subcommittee plans to consider new sanctions, including those proposed by Representative Ron Dellums, the sponsor of last year's measure. Dellums's latest bill would halt almost all U.S.-South African trade, end U.S. investment in South Africa and prohibit any U.S. military and intelligence cooperation with Pretoria.

■ Next on the 'Pro-Life' Agenda

In the aftermath of the failed Supreme Court nominations of Robert Bork and Douglas Ginsburg, frustration is mounting in antiabortion circles. According to the Ad Hoc Committee in Defense of Life, "anti-aborts" are peeved that Bork got the boot and that Reagan then nominated Ginsburg, who had no record on the issue. With time running out on this "pro-life" presidency, they are beginning to wonder where they went wrong in their campaign to win an antiabortion majority on the Supreme Court. The group's newsletter, "Lifeletter," offered a disturbing answer: "Maybe the problem is that anti-aborts have been *too* loyal, and too *nice*; they have not followed the obvious example of the 'Civil Rights' movement. There's been little violence . . . and only small-change 'civil disobedience.'" Was that a plea for more violence? A member of the newsletter's staff said she did not believe it was. "But you know," she added, "the civil rights movement was very violent."

■ Another Third-Rate Burglary

Once again the Washington offices of a group critical of the Administration's policy in Central America have been burglarized. The Central American Historical Institute, which publishes a newsletter and is affiliated with the Jesuit-run institute of the same name in Nicaragua, was broken into on October 29. A locked file that contained the group's financial records was forced open, according to Betsy Cohn, the institute's director. Cohn said that a small amount of cash in the file was left untouched. Washington police told United Press International that the break-in was similar to more than a dozen burglaries that have occurred in the Washington area over the past two years.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Front-Runner

MARY SUMMERS

THUNDER IN AMERICA: The Improbable Presidential Campaign of Jesse Jackson. *By Bob Faw and Nancy Skelton. Texas Monthly Press. 262 pp. $16.95.*

THE RAINBOW CHALLENGE: The Jackson Campaign and the Future of U.S. Politics. *By Sheila D. Collins. Monthly Review Press. 384 pp. $11.*

THE JESSE JACKSON PHENOMENON: The Crisis of Purpose in Afro-American Politics. *By Adolph L. Reed, Jr. Yale University Press. 170 pp. $20. Paper $7.95.*

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART. *By the Reverend Jesse L. Jackson. Edited by Roger D. Hatch and Frank E. Watkins. Fortress Press. 324 pp. $18.95.*

I went to work for Jesse Jackson's first presidential campaign for many of the same reasons that I volunteered for Eugene McCarthy and Ted Kennedy and Dennis Kucinich, the populist Mayor of Cleveland. People who want change have to find ways to engage in the political debate as it is occurring; it is not enough to cultivate private gardens of perfect politics.

I became Jackson's speechwriter. The job involved both great rewards and enormous frustrations. The chief thrust of the campaign was an appeal to racial pride in the black community, but I thought that we also suggested the potential of a radical, common-sense, populist agenda to both black and white people. I went back to work for Jackson after the Democratic Convention with the idea that we had four years to lay the basis for a much more serious candidacy the second time around. With some hard work it seemed quite possible to develop a challenge to national priorities that promote corporate power and profits for the few and belt-tightening, environmental disaster, war and the threat of war for the rest of us. If we succeeded, we could help give substance, energy and vision to the concept of a progressive wing of the Democratic Party.

I finally came to the reluctant conclusion that the politics and working style of the first campaign were not just the byproducts of trying to do too much too soon with too few resources, but were basic to Jackson's view of the world and his role in it. Jesse Jackson knows how to ride the waves of history better than anyone, but riding waves is a wild art practiced by exceedingly talented individuals; it does not require working with others to develop a plan to turn the tide. His sense of what can be accomplished seems to have been irrevocably shaped by a lifetime of chasing headlines, and promoting positive thinking for black teen-agers and fast food and beer franchises for a handful of black businessmen.

For most of his life Jackson has seen himself as a spokesman for minorities, "the damned, the despised and the dispossessed," as he named them in his Democratic Convention speech. His goal has been to demand "a place at the table" as their representative. Black leaders who seek only to represent black people can never command the kind of mandate needed to improve the lives of the vast majority of the citizens they claim to serve. Even with the best of intentions, they end up begging and bargaining, threatening and cajoling to get what crumbs they can from the people with real power. Most end up pursuing the kind of patronage politics in which demanding "respect for black interests" becomes a fight for a handful of jobs and contracts.

Jackson is such an inspiring figure because he comes close to representing something quite different. At his best he is able to speak to the aspirations of a great number of constituencies. In doing so as a presidential candidate, he often seems to be on the verge of vastly expanding the terms and scope of the political debate. Yet when push comes to shove, he consistently uses the tremendous excitement that he mobilizes simply to promote his own position as a negotiator, as a broker with the powers that be. It does not seem to occur to him that he could be leading a serious and sustained challenge to the status quo.

In 1984 he called for a 20 percent cut in the military budget, for putting people in this country to work and for a new noninterventionist foreign policy. He was not afraid to emphasize how different his priorities were from Hart's and Mondale's. When he actually arrived with his delegates at the Democratic Convention, however, "peace" became an elaborately choreographed accommodation with the party hierarchy. The "jobs" he fought for placed a handful of friends in the Mondale campaign apparatus. "Justice" was his chance to speak to a national prime-time television audience for forty-five minutes, an event in which he demonstrated his personal charisma to millions of people but did not attempt to involve them in an ongoing fight for "a new direction"—a characteristic which sharply distinguished his effort from Ted Kennedy's in 1980. (Kennedy spoke to the traditions of the Democratic Party as the party of the people that Carter had betrayed; Jackson raised many inspirational themes, but basically accommodated Mondale.)

As he approaches 1988, Jackson seems more and more convinced that he no longer needs to see himself simply as a spokesman for minorities. For him, however, this is not an indication that the status quo can change but only that he can begin to cultivate a new role as a mainstream presidential candidate. The more he establishes himself as a full and equal member of the company of seven (now six) dwarfs, the more he sounds like the rest of them.

In addressing farmers in Iowa, or the American Public Health Association, he still speaks far more boldly to his audience's aspirations for a better world than any other politician. When it comes to the key issues of the public debate, however, he usually does not attempt to distinguish himself from his fellow candidates in ways that would clarify a progressive agenda. Jackson now joins the rest in attacking Germany and Japan for not paying "their fair share" of our military budget instead of stressing the criminal priorities of the Pentagon. Dukakis seems to be raising more sharply than Jackson the question of whether we should risk young men's lives and World War III for Kuwaiti oil. Simon seems more willing to put himself on the line for a serious jobs program. In what is almost a caricature of a front runner, Jackson chooses to stress his record and his name recognition: "I'm the civil rights leader; I brought Lieutenant Goodman back home," etc.

Mary Summers was Jesse Jackson's chief speechwriter for the 1984 campaign and is now a graduate student in political science at Yale University.

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HYPOCRISY: AMERICA'S LEADING EXPORT

Under the cover of "making the world safe for democracy", the U.S. has countless Military interventions and covert operations directed at destabilizing sovereign nations and popularly supported governments. Washington, D.C.'s rhetoric about democratic rights is twice over a fraud. Its global exploits have more to do with propping up multinational corporate interests than with the export of democracy. And the U.S. record on democracy at home is abysmal.

The U.S. is ranked near the bottom of some 75 world-wide electoral democracies in voter participation. A maze of legislation and regulations restricts voter registration and impedes access to the ballot for insurgents and independents. A steady erosion of the fairness doctrine has led to monopolization of the media by heavily funded major party candidates. And genuine public debate on critical social and foreign policy issues is stifled by the lack of democratic process.

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I try to talk myself out of these conclusions every time I see Jackson's numbers go up in the polls, and I understand why what I have to say makes people furious. "But he is our Reagan," they reply. "He's the only one who speaks to us and for us." Perhaps that is what worries me most. What Jesse Jackson offers to the black community and to the left is very similar to what Ronald Reagan has offered to so many Americans: an ability to look them in the eye and talk about their hopes and dreams and values, about how hard they work and what they want for themselves and their children, in a way that makes people feel better about themselves and about the world they live in. It is a great gift, but the American people are *not* better off today because Ronald Reagan has been their President for the last seven years. It's the substance of what Jesse Jackson has to offer that concerns me—and the consequences of embracing his leadership for both the black community and the left.

With this personal perspective on Jackson in mind, I decided to accept an invitation to review four of the recent books on Jackson's 1984 campaign, with an eye toward assessing his impact on 1988. In writing such a review, there is no way to get around the fact that the political is personal. Any pretense to objectivity on my part would be a significant disservice to the authors involved, all of whom I have talked with for many hours. This review should be seen instead as an effort to pursue a debate that I hope will be helpful both to those who decide to participate in the Jackson campaign in '88 (I often found outside critics helpful in '84) and to those who are trying to think more generally about how progressive people can participate in American politics.

Bob Faw and Nancy Skelton's *Thunder in America: The Improbable Presidential Campaign of Jesse Jackson* represents the attempt of two capable journalists to reflect what they saw in a year on the road with Jackson. They succeed in catching the rhythms of his speeches in the black community and the excitement he creates there, but Faw and Skelton are too moved by the people who are moved by Jackson to put their minds to work at any more substantive analysis of his campaign's significance to American politics. They rarely attempt to distinguish the dream from the reality, the stunts from history in the making.

They are intrigued by Jackson's personality. They do their best to capture his style: "Consumed with today's mission, he was perpetually in motion, speaking, acting, hurling charges, issuing demands, too busy to sit down and carefully plot out any long-range plan." While they try to capture Jackson's complexity, they tend to stereotype his supporters, both black and white, and many of their thumbnail sketches suffer accordingly. All too often their narrative relies on a fairly easy sense of irony and poignancy.

The greatest contribution of *Thunder in America* lies in its attempt to confront the issues generated by the campaign in so many talk shows, both public and private. Is Jesse a racist? Are people who don't like him racist? What about black pride? What about white backlash? The book lays out all the anxious, aching, bloody, obsessive talk about race that goes on whenever people are encouraged to pick the scabs of their individual injuries, their resentment and their guilt. The long chapter titled "Hymie" is the best, and the most painful, in the book. The authors interviewed scores of people, especially Jews, who have tried to talk to Jackson about how he talks about Jews. They spoke with black people who talked to other black people and to Jews about how Jackson talks about Jews—and they tried to talk to Jackson and his wife about the subject. It is a difficult and complicated story, and the problem of confusing criticisms of Israel with anti-Semitism is rampant.

Some of the interviews here succeed in getting to the essence of the problem that Jackson still has with the subject. Here is Hyman Bookbinder, the Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee, recalling a conversation that he had with Jackson in 1979:

> I told him we can disagree on quotas or rights of Palestinians, but I said "Jesse, when you talk of Jewish slumlords, you drive me up the wall. . . ." I said "Jesse, you're talking about slumlords, you're not talking about Jewish slumlords." (He said,) "Well, what's the difference, they're Jews." I said, "Jesse, don't you know the first ABCs about bigotry and prejudice. . . . why do you point out their Jewishness? They're also white, they're middle-aged, they're all men. . . . when you attribute to a group, to a segment of life, bad attributes of an individual or two, you are being bigoted, you are saying Jews are slumlords." . . . I found myself having to say things like—"Do you get angry when you read stories about black rapists? They're

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not black rapists—they're rapists. And anytime we see references to black rapists, you and I should get very angry about it, that's what I'm talking about. . . ." It did not register.

At his best, Jackson speaks about the need to "move beyond racial battlegrounds to economic common grounds and moral higher ground," but such prescriptions have the same abstract quality as his calls for "jobs, peace and justice." In dealing with any particular racially charged situation, he never seems to come to grips with the idea that divisions exist because of certain "ABCs." For him, racial differences are so fundamental that it is perfectly natural to play to them in public and joke about them in private. He does not believe that anyone should be denied a seat at the table, but he is more comfortable with good ol' boys like George Wallace and Orville Faubus, who also know how to play to and for their constituents, than he is with a man like Bookbinder.

When Jackson was finally persuaded that he could not continue his '84 campaign until he made a public apology for the "hymie" reference, his speech included a litany of his and his family's many difficult encounters with Jewish people, including his daughter's with a Harvard admissions officer, as if such difficulties could explain, if not justify, his comment. He personalizes everything in a fashion very similar to the way that elderly ethnics introduce racist remarks with long stories about the number of times they have been mugged by black kids. He also never tries to come to terms with the larger political context, with the fact that whether you are black or white, if you criticize Israel publicly some Zionists will try to mug you.

As a result, Jackson sabotaged what might have been a major contribution to American politics—opening the door to a more rational discussion of U.S. policies toward Israel, the Palestinians and the Middle East. He helped to fulfill the most paranoid predictions of the worst of Israel's hawks, those who claim that only an anti-Semite would criticize their embattled nation. The fact that none of these problems have been resolved as Jackson heads toward '88 was evident in a recent *New York Times* story about an appearance he made at a fund-raiser in California, where a young black lawyer asked him if his relations with Jews had improved. In his answer Jackson "referred to 'Jewish support' for the white South African government." *The Times* noted dryly

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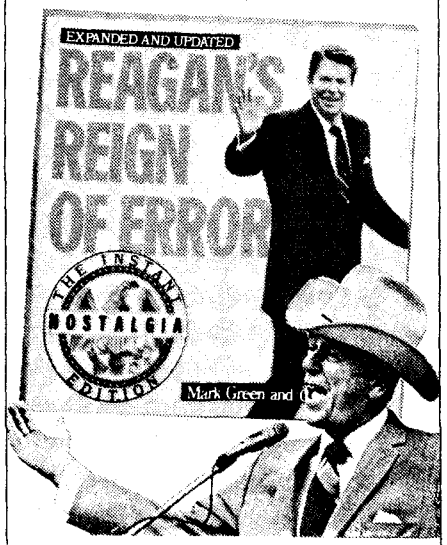

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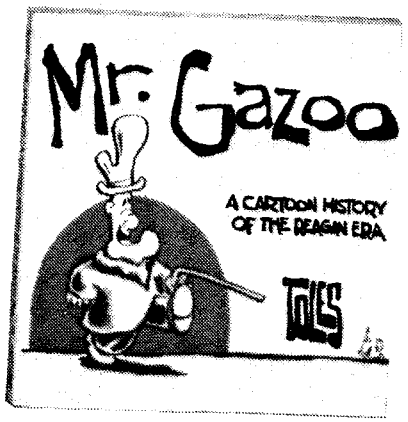

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that his response "offended many of those in the room who assumed that Mr. Jackson really meant Israel's continuing trade relationship with South Africa, which includes the sale of arms." Referring to a subsequent confrontation the lawyer quoted Jackson as saying that his questioner should have "let the Jews speak for themselves."

As his attack on the lawyer shows, Jackson expects racial loyalty to be primary. He despises people who do not display such loyalty and leaders who fail to command it. "White women flunked," was one of his more frequent comments in interviews after the Mondale/Ferraro defeat. The words convey both his fury at the respect that the Democratic Party hierarchy had paid to the National Organization for Women and his scorn for them and their undisciplined constituents. It is to Faw and Skelton's credit that they try to come to grips with the centrality of race—and racial relations—in this campaign, however hard a good many of us tried to change the subject.

If *Thunder in America* can be read as an example of how sympathetic representatives of the mass media choose to deal with the Jackson campaign, Sheila D. Collins's book, *The Rainbow Challenge: The Jackson Campaign and the Future of U.S. Politics*, is a study in what Jim Sleeper has called "the woozy desperation" of the left. Just how embarrassing this book is going to be is clear from the opening paraphrase of Charles Dickens:

> 1984. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the age of soaring black truth; it was the age of great white lies. It was the season of multicolored quilts and rainbows; it was the season of white male arrogance.

Collins, who first volunteered for the campaign in New Hampshire and eventually became its National Rainbow Coordinator, takes on every criticism that has ever been made of Jackson; she comes up with an excuse or a flat denial for each one of them. She defends his slapdash scheduling as a "creative" attempt "to keep his enemies confused." The frenetic style in which he pursued photo opportunities, never setting aside time to develop a strategy after the 1984 primary, is justified by the fact that he "was compelled to keep the idea of the National Rainbow Coalition alive through the sheer energy and inventiveness of his personal charisma. Thus . . . for the next two years he embarked on a whirlwind one-man publicity campaign."

In her discussion of state Rainbow Coalition organizations, Collins considers Vermont, Washington and Alabama, thereby avoiding a state such as New Jersey, where Jackson backed Kenneth Gibson in his struggle against insurgents who wanted to claim the Rainbow banner to help fight machine politics. Collins does hint at a few problems in people around Jackson when she uses phrases such as "the internalized ethnocentrism of the black leadership," but she never goes so far as to mention the general tendency of the campaign hierarchy to discourage active outreach to either black or white voters.

Collins feels that she has to defend Jackson so vigorously because she believes so desperately in the need for "a progressive movement" that has its roots in "the black community." For Collins "the black perspective" means "hope, healing, justice, peace." The "unthinkable alternative" is "nuclear war, ecological destruction, possibly an American style of fascism." The Rainbow Coalition represents the only chance she sees "to unhinge powerful sectors of the white united front—namely, white women, white labor, white farmers, white issue-constituencies . . . and to unite them into an opposition bloc that [rejects] the racist values that are at the heart of the American imperial enterprise and . . . [undergird] white identity."

In her chapter on "The Ideology of the Jackson Campaign," Collins defines black consciousness in terms of its "phenomenological realism" about history. She then uses speeches and press statements about the mining of the harbors of Managua, the fight against the Seabrook nuclear power plant and populist struggles in Wisconsin to prove how different black consciousness is from "the utilitarian individualism and technical rationality that characterize the white middle class values that have become hegemonic in American society."

Collins knows that I wrote those speeches and she knows that I am white and middle class. Her theories about "black consciousness" lead her to stretch and strain the meaning of the term. Her concept of "a white united front" wastes energy and clarity in anyone's fight for a better world. She not only fails to come to terms with the contradictions of politics in the black community; she also fails to see any opportunities for fighting for progressive

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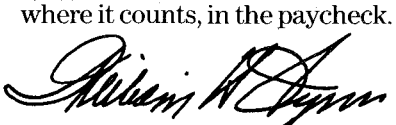

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politics in the mainstream of American life. (In fact, her scheme of things puts the needs and aspirations of black people as far outside the mainstream as Ronald Reagan's does.) She gives a false impression of Jackson's strengths (which are immense but do not include much knowledge of history or nuclear power or populism), and she trashes the white middle class, of which she too is a member.

Collins accuses the black political scientist Adolph L. Reed Jr. of attempting "to revise history in the service of the political right" with his book *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon*. But for Collins, *any* public criticism of Jackson is by definition on the side of Armageddon. Despite Reed's rather dense and academic prose, his critique represents the only attempt that I have seen to come to terms with the significance of the Jackson campaign in history as we are living it, rather than as we would wish to live it.

It is true that Reed fails to acknowledge the positive lessons that can be learned from the Jackson campaign. He focuses on the need to engage in "routinized programmatic politics" (i.e., you ought to figure out a way to fight for what you want in the real world, rather than simply giving great speeches and engaging in symbolic battles). He is concerned about methods of "leadership ratification." (How did Jackson come to be anointed as *the* spokesman for the black community when he has never held any elected office?) But these criticisms miss the point that many people in this country are looking for *any* leader who will speak to the realities of their lives with some passion and conviction. Jesse Jackson's popularity is not just something to shake your head over. It should be a source of inspiration to anyone who wants to participate in politics with some sense of a bold agenda.

Seeing what Jackson does right, however, is the easy part. Reed takes on much of what is most difficult. He attacks "a patronizing, exceptionalist bias that suspends norms of critical reflection and judgment" when it comes to discussions of black politics. In fact he began this book as an irate letter to *The Nation* in reply to an editorial similar to Andrew Kopkind's appreciative piece on Jackson earlier this month. Reed confronts the enthusiasm about one charismatic black leader with several realities. First, Jesse Jackson is *not* responsible for "two million new voters" (to use Kopkind's estimate). Reed uses statistics on increasing black registration and turnout since 1974 to suggest that while the Jackson candidacy has served to draw national attention to the phenomenon of increased black voter participation, it is not a cause of this phenomenon.

Second, Reed raises the question of whether the Jackson candidacy represents a vehicle for dealing with any of the serious problems of life in the black community. It is because Reed cares so much about the condition of blacks at the lowest end of the economic spectrum that he speaks so insistently to the fact that "the hope that Jackson [preaches] is not grounded in politics . . . in concrete strategic options."

Reed is fiercely critical of the political bankruptcy in the black community that created the void Jackson has rushed to fill. He is outraged by those who would restrict black political activity "to such self-congratulatory goals as quest for self-respect or creation of 'positive images' or 'role models' for the race."

Grown-ups, Reed insists, enter politics in order to achieve real political ends in the real political world. What are Jackson's ends, he asks, and how will they help any of us to achieve our goals for ourselves and our children? How did dual primaries—an issue that

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hurts as many black candidates as it helps, and one to which black voters have expressed "universal indifference"—become the critical litmus test of "respect" for black interests at the Democratic Convention? How was it that in "the important debate over the party's future . . . the Jackson forces could find no position to press other than the right to be accounted for properly in the party hierarchy"?

Reed's chief concern is that the Jackson phenomenon is representative of the fact that in the black community "entrenched elites have been able with impunity to identify collective racial interest with an exceedingly narrow class agenda." Black people who so desperately need decent jobs and housing and health care and schools are being represented as if their chief concerns are for affirmative action and set-aside programs for minority contractors—and how much "respect" the Democratic Party pays to Jesse Jackson. Jesse Jackson's needs and aspirations are being treated as if they really do represent the needs and aspirations of black Americans. Reed can not think of a better way to render black input on major policy questions essentially meaningless.

Reed's book is far from perfect, either in terms of its accessibility or in terms of a full appreciation of the complexities of "the Jackson phenomenon"; but it does represent a major contribution toward the democratic debate as to what sort of political agenda is necessary to change the conditions of life in our nation's ghettos and what sort of political strategy might help to achieve this. It was an act of courage to write this book at a time when so many Jackson partisans denounce his critics as sellouts and race traitors or racists. *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon* is a thoughtful critique of Jackson from the left; it should be helpful to anyone who makes the effort to read it.

Reed's analysis is a particularly interesting companion piece to Jackson's own recently published *Straight From the Heart*, a collection of thirty-six of his public speeches, sermons, eulogies, essays and interviews. Knowing how many people have been involved in writing for Jackson, I initially assumed that the title would turn out to be one of the biggest misnomers of all time; but this book does reflect a good deal about Jackson. No doubt it is possible to overinterpret the volume's conservative thrust. Jackson is perfectly capable of changing his politics whenever he feels the need. This book is intended as a campaign vehicle, however, and it seems fair to take its implications seriously in understanding the role that Jackson sees for himself in '88. The two editors (one of whom is his longtime press secretary, Frank Watkins) and Jackson have obviously decided that the way to enhance his image as a mainstream candidate is to emphasize his ability to speak "from his heart" to both conservatives and liberals in language and about issues that are close to them.

"Political Votes, Economic Oats," a speech given before the Republican National Committee in 1978, is the third presented in the first section of the book, which is headed "Political Progressive." The address follows the Democratic Convention oration and the speech Jackson gave at the 1983 March on Washington. "Political Votes, Economic Oats" is, therefore, placed in a position of great prominence; it is also a vivid statement of the defensive strategy and the economic goals behind Jackson's approach to politics:

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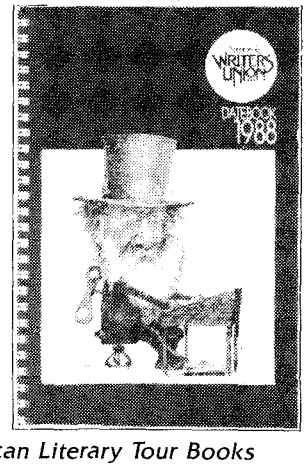

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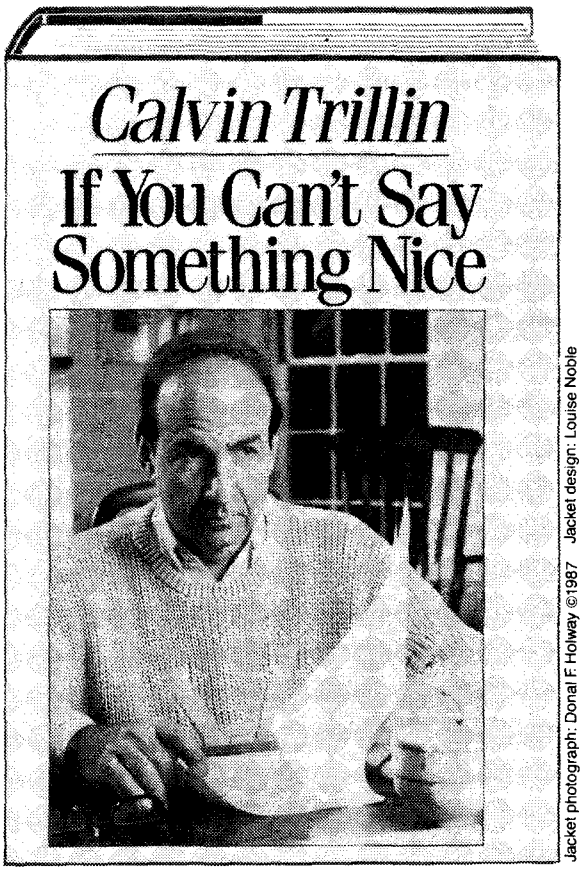

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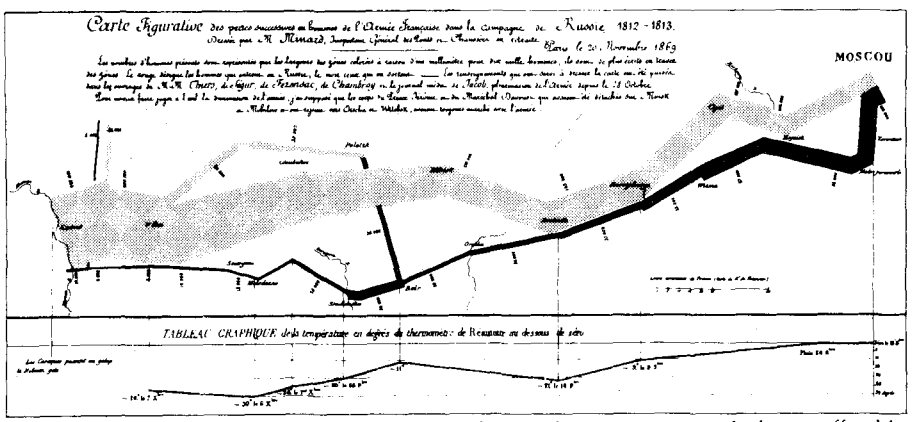
From Calvin Trillin's nationally syndicated column



This map, drawn by the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard in 1869, portrays the losses suffered by Napoleon's army in the Russian campaign of 1812. Beginning at the left on the Polish-Russian border near the Niemen, the thick band shows the size of the army (422,000 men) as it invaded Russia. The width of the band indicates the size of the army at each position. In September, the army reached Moscow with 100,000 men. The path of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow in the bitterly cold winter is depicted by the dark lower band, which is tied to a temperature scale. The remains of the Grande Armée struggled out of Russia with only 10,000 men. Minard displayed *six* dimensions of data on the two-dimensional surface of the paper.

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cide is to remain necessary. . . . It's a mystery to me why Republicans have had the attitude that blacks will not vote for them. Blacks vote as intelligently and as diversely as any other group. We vote our vested interests.

Quite aside from the fact that this is a future Democratic candidate for President speaking, this is an extraordinary statement. The idea that blacks (whose voting patterns have shown a more certain sense of their fundamental interests than those of most Americans) will vote for Republicans as readily as Democrats flies in the face of reality every bit as much as Collins's claim that they represent the source of every revolutionary aspiration; and yet Jackson insists on it, and even finds bizarre examples: "In 1960, the black vote of Fulton County, Georgia . . . carried the county for Mr. Nixon. . . . We are growing up now. We are maturing. We know how to split our tickets."

This concept of "staying necessary" to "prevent political genocide" illustrates what I mean by Jackson's defensive approach to politics. Instead of engaging in a serious struggle for leadership within the Democratic Party (which is the only conceivable vehicle for the kind of change in foreign and domestic policies that he often claims to have in mind), he tries to use his broker's role to play the two major parties off against each other. Whenever he feels insulted by party chair Paul Kirk (who does have a terrible tendency to dismiss the major constituencies of the Democratic Party as special interest groups), Jackson calls a press conference to hint at a massive defection of black voters to the other side of the aisle. The threat is accompanied by as little follow-through as his calls for a boycott of major league baseball if its teams don't hire more black managers; but Jackson tries it again and again. Such tactics represent one way to command a few headlines; but they are also a sign of bankruptcy when it comes to the fundamental concerns of most of his constituents.

The fact that there are some constituents for whom this defensive strategy can be quite helpful, however, is also clear from Jackson's speech to the Republicans. He actually names the people that he expects to put on the gravy train. Black voters are going to judge the Republican Party, he tells its National Committee, by how it treats "Bob Brown, Jim Cummings, Sam Jackson, Gloria Toote, Jewel LaFontant, Art Fletcher." Good jobs and contracts for "these

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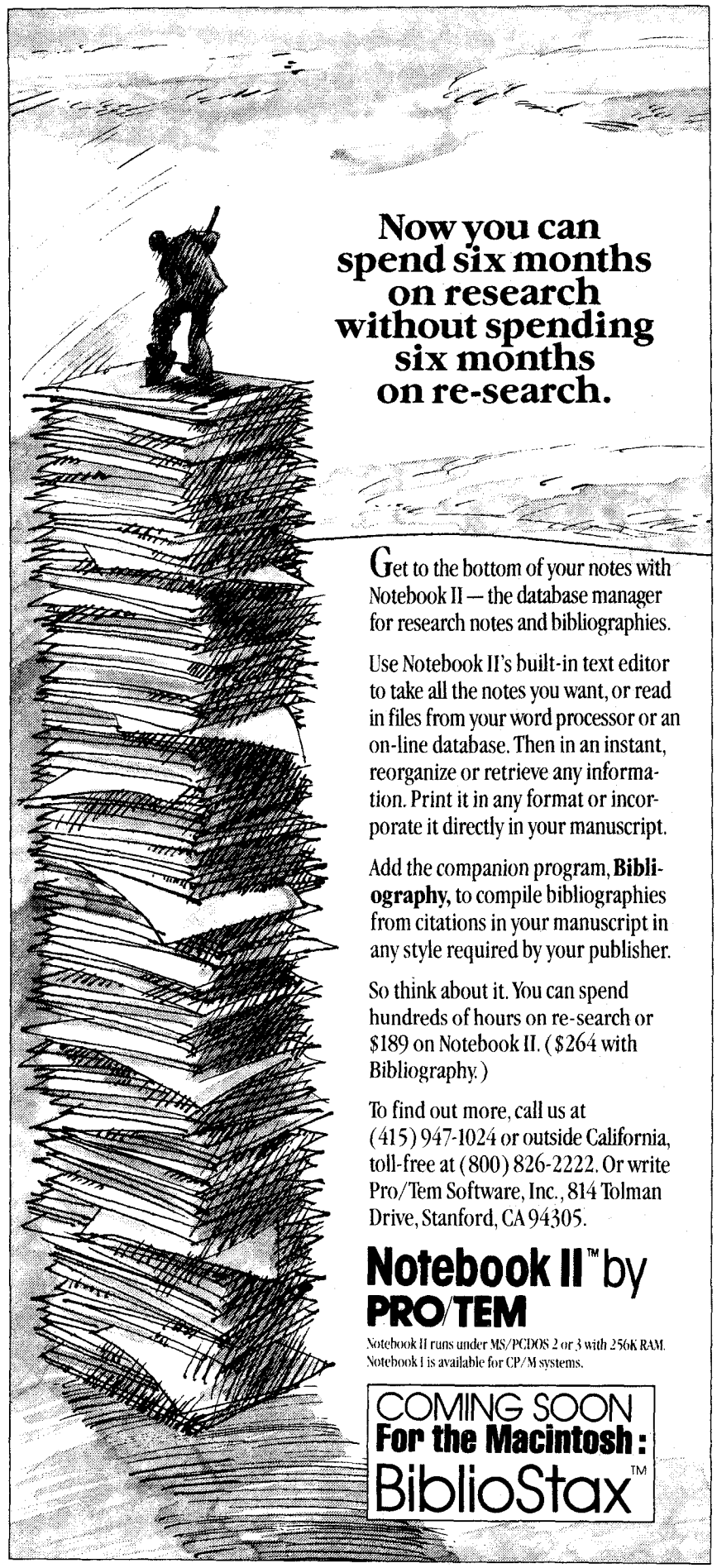
tried and true black Republican warriors are the bridges to . . . untapped black resources."

Jackson's concept of the vested interests of the black community as being those of a handful of businessmen is further underscored in a debate he had with Charles Murray, which appears in a section of the book titled "Corporate and Cultural Critic." Murray, the author of *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980*, is one of the most prominent critics of any government involvement in social welfare programs. Jackson chooses to lecture him about the fact that blacks own fewer than 240 car dealerships and only two beverage-bottle franchises. He proudly cites the fact that Operation PUSH forced Ford to grant thirty new black dealerships in one year, employing more than fifty people each—"and those jobs represent the alternative to welfare and despair." It is actually *Murray* who ends up arguing that "more access [for blacks] to entrepreneurial business positions" is unlikely to have "a fundamental effect on poverty and the underclass"!

By and large, even the speeches that demonstrate Jackson's appeal to liberal audiences seem to have been chosen to prove how safe he is, how interchangeable with any of the other mainstream Democratic candidates. The "peace speech" is not one from the 1984 campaign calling for cutting the military budget and an end to a foreign policy that "puts our nation on the wrong side of history" and "serves no one but multinational corporations seeking cheap labor markets abroad." It is an expression of support for Salt II, given at a college commencement in 1979, when Jimmy Carter was President. The South Africa speech, also given in 1979, calls on Congress only for a ban on the sale of Krugerrands, a position that has long been supported by everyone to the left of Strom Thurmond.

I personally consider Jackson's "social uplift" themes, his ability to speak to what is often considered a conservative sense of social values, one of his greatest strengths. It is as important to challenge black teen-agers to become your allies in any sort of effort to change the world as it is Congress. (There is certainly reason to think that they could be far more useful.) Slogans like "Jesus was born in a slum; but the slum wasn't born in him" and "down with dope; up with hope" are more appealing than the hand-wringing speeches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of those who use the terrible figures on crime, unemployment and drug abuse simply to push for a few more grants and positions for themselves in the welfare bureaucracy.

The way in which *Straight From the Heart* sets out to prove Jackson's appeal to social conservatives, however, is a little too much. There are four speeches in "Evangelist for Educational Excellence," five in "Preacher," plus three funeral eulogies in "Comforter," all intended to present Jackson as a religious and inspirational leader. The overall effect is to make Tipper Gore look like a candidate for the Sex Pistols. Jackson quotes Mick Jagger's "Some Girls" at length in order to expose its lurid lyrics. He takes on the Funkedelics for "Doo-Doo Chasers," Exile for "I Want to Kiss You All Over" and Betty Wright for "Tonight's the Night I Become a Woman." "We must call pornographic music what it is," he says, "child abuse."

In a speech titled, "Religious Liberty: Civil Disobedience, Conscience, and Survival," he dwells on the problem of "decadence" in ways suggesting that he is not immune to the tendency of so many social conservatives to blame the victims of this society—and to feel contempt for them as well. His scorn for the behavior of the $2 bettors at the racetrack ("eating hot dogs, drinking beer, chewing peanuts, and talking loud") as opposed to the $100 bettors, who use their binoculars to watch the horses, is quite striking. Even more disturbing is the way he talks about sex and women: "Many girls stoop to the distortion of abortion because they are not educated to appreciate life. They walk as hunks of sex, and boys fall for the bait, and then both, out of passion, panic."

There are a handful of speeches from the 1984 campaign in *Straight From the Heart* which do suggest why Jackson's candidacy was so exciting to so many people, black and white. In these speeches he calls his campaign a "crusade to transform the quality of American life":

> We want to restore a moral quality to the political decisions that affect our lives at home and the decisions that affect the lives of our brothers and sisters around the globe. We want to set our nation on a course where the full spiritual, moral, and physical resources of our people can be realized. We want to end the exploitation and oppression of the many by the few.

Jackson speaks to much that is best in the American people.

I still believe that Jesse Jackson has had a great chance to redirect the course of American history. No one can deny that he has created much of that opportunity himself. He has laid claim to the greatest traditions of the civil rights movement and the peace movement at a time when so many other "leaders" have settled for much less. He has a feeling for what's news and how to make it, just when everyone else is suffering from terminal boredom.

I do not believe that his failure to work for real change in the real world is the result of an irreconcilable contradiction between charismatic leadership and organization; nor do I believe the problem is that he is too limited by his base in the black bourgeoisie. They will follow any course that he chooses to chart; it would, after all, be to their advantage for Jackson to achieve national office or to develop a national movement and organization capable of promoting major changes in our national priorities.

The problem is Jesse Jackson. He can see no other way to play his game. He thinks that he has to keep dancing and bobbing and weaving, inspiring one minute, threatening the next, offering to play roles that range from Conscience of the Democratic Party to Negotiator for the National Football League, but never ultimately involving anyone else in a serious challenge to the status quo. He does not see the need for a clear progressive agenda, or a serious organization; either one would confine him and limit his ability to take advantage of his opportunities as he sees them. Jesse Jackson is as deeply rooted in the contradictions of life in the United States as are any of the other candidates. Different contradictions, perhaps, more interesting to some and more frustrating to others. More relevant in that the experiences, values and goals of the people that he speaks to—from ghettos to farms, from environmental activists to cleaning women—are so much more wide-ranging; less relevant in that he has no strategy for winning or for achieving any concrete objectives.

The issue before us is not simply one of evaluating Jackson's efforts; his achievements are his, but they are not his alone. Generations of people have fought and some have died to put Jesse Jackson in the position he is in today. We do not keep faith with their vision of a better world for their children and their children's children if we simply choose to celebrate his accomplish-

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ments. My intention here is not to discourage anyone from working for or voting for Jackson; he may still represent the best choice, if your main goal is to express your alienation from the limited terms of the present political debate. But I do want to suggest that there is no free lunch in American politics. If you get involved in the Jackson campaign, you have to be as ready to fight for greater clarity and better politics there as you would in any other. □

A Miller's Tale

JAMES LARDNER

TIMEBENDS: A Life. *By Arthur Miller. Grove Press. 614 pp. $24.95.*

Arthur Miller is not what I would call a representative man of our times, and yet of all the writers of his generation who have given us their autobiographies, I know of none who has so persuasively captured the political journey from the 1930s to the 1950s and beyond—or who has done a better job of explaining why the early revelation of Marxism's promise took hold so swiftly and completely, why the later revelation of Marxism's actuality was so stubbornly resisted and how both revelations shaped art and life.

Miller is a trustworthy witness to a period that has carried others to dizzying heights of melodramatics and self-justification. How much can a man be hiding, after all, if he quotes his own sober judgment, toward the end of World War II, that the rout of the German Army on the eastern front proved the power of the Soviet people's faith in communism? Or if, in recalling his early infatuation with Marxism, he points out that it was a weapon ideally suited to father-son combat? Miller's father was a garment manufacturer who went bust in the first years of the Depression, losing his car, his chauffeur, his country bungalow and his wife's jewelry (pawned to keep up the mortgage payments). "Profit is evil, profit is wrong!" the teen-aged Arthur Miller lectured his old man in a voice that had yet to finish changing. Isidore Miller's failure could be forgiven, his son was saying, but only if he repented of his sins as an employer and accepted his place as "a kind of digit in a nearly cosmic catastrophe that was beyond his powers to avoid."

Miller's conversion occurred at 16, outside a Brooklyn drugstore. He was waiting his turn to play in the neighborhood handball game when a fellow loiterer seized the moment to explain the dynamics of capitalism and socialism, and the fact that the one would soon be swept from the face of the earth by the other. The year was 1932, and then, as now, the streetcorner was where a boy was introduced to life's most delicious knowledge.

The prospect of a classless society had a "disarming sweetness that called forth the generosity of youth," Miller writes. And how could an adolescent resist a message that came accompanied by the drumbeat of worldwide economic collapse? History seemed to be shouting from the rooftops that capitalism was not only immoral but impotent, while communism was not only just but (at least potentially) strong. For once, the ethical arguments and the power arguments pointed the same way. The wonder is that the 1930s did not turn every son of every father into a communist—but even the best factories, I suppose, produce a few defective goods.

Sixteen years after he met Marx on the handball field, Miller met two Yugoslav U.N. delegates in Lillian Hellman's apartment. Unpretentious veterans of the resistance, muscular and plain-spoken, they were exactly the sort of people Miller and Hellman, for all their differences, most respected. But in Miller's recollection, she "listened with uncustomary silence . . . almost inanimate in her cloud of cigarette smoke" as the guests presented a detailed account of the Soviet Union's postwar plunder of Yugoslavia.

"You believe them?" Hellman asked Miller after the delegates had departed.

Hedging, he said that they had "sounded truthful." Hellman replied that with any luck the Stalin-Tito fracas would blow over—unless, as rumor had it, Tito turned out to be an American *provocateur.*

When I say that Miller is an honest witness, I mean above all in the details, which speak louder than some of the explanatory matter in which they come wrapped. Miller repeatedly asks himself why it took him so long to see the true character of the Soviet Union—why he failed to understand that the Nazis, with their "captive trade unions, mass youth organizations, secret police, informers in the workplace and the home, masses of political prisoners, and at the center of it all idolatry of the state and its leader," had drawn inspiration from the Bolsheviks, merely substituting nationalism and racism for economic justice as their "central 'spiritual' content." In reply, he cites his memory of the Soviet sacrifices in the war, his desire to cling to "a certain holy truth [that] still lay cradled in whatever sublime confusion" within the Stalinist reality and his unwillingness to "join the anti-Soviet crusade, especially when it seemed to entail disowning and falsifying the American radical past, at least as I had known and felt it."

His story suggests a larger answer. Marxism in the abstract had been a hopeful discovery, and it had come in adolescence; Marxism in the flesh was a depressing discovery that came in middle age, a time of life far less receptive to new information. If the Soviet Union was the working model of a more equitable way of organizing a society, and if the model was rotten, what hope was there for a fundamentally better world in a person's lifetime? To acknowledge the truth about Stalin was, perversely, to resign oneself to a future in which American-style capitalism would reign for years to come as the world's most compelling economic model. Gazing long and deep into the future, one might even see a distant speck of a comet named Ronald Reagan. Who can wonder that a lot of people preferred to avert their eyes? One could call it sanity.

Miller showed rare sanity, and real courage, when McCarthyism came along. Although he had never been a Communist Party member—he had discovered at an early age that he was allergic to meetings—he invited trouble by writing *The Crucible* in 1953. Three years later, when the House Un-American Activities Committee offered him a guest shot on its quiz show, Miller continued to make things hard on himself. By then he was engaged to Marilyn Monroe, who was under contract to Twentieth Century Fox, whose boss, that great patriot and family man Spyros Skouras, would go the extra mile to protect his people from the taint of subversion. Skouras was prepared to arrange a private hearing so

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no one would have to know what Miller had said. When Miller turned down that offer, the committee made him another: There would be no hearing at all if the future Mrs. Miller would merely consent to appear in a photo opportunity shaking hands with Francis Walter, the chairman of HUAC. Miller nixed that one, too.

Like Hellman, he took the position that he would testify about himself but not about others. Unlike her, he passed up the smooth defense of the Fifth Amendment for the dicey First, which guaranteed an indictment for contempt of Congress, with a possible prison sentence to follow. When the indictment came, Miller and his lawyer, Joseph Rauh, fought the case on the argument previously but unsuccessfully advanced by the Hollywood Ten: that HUAC's questions were irrelevant to any lawful legislative purpose. Although an intervening case (and a change in the makeup of the Supreme Court) certainly helped Miller win the point, one would have to have a very pure view of the workings of justice not to suppose that his willingness to make such a defense was one of the things that made it respectable.

Miller has taken a stream-of-consciousness approach to the autobiography business, and the reader, accordingly, spends a good deal of time in the swirl of the author's thoughts. But when the mist clears, he delivers us into some picturesque settings and rich situations and shows us that he remains a first-rate storyteller with a fine ear for dialogue—and a deep trunk of notebooks, I suspect.

In 1944, with only a single Broadway play to his name (and a flop, at that), Miller was hired to write a movie based on the war reportage of Ernie Pyle. He turned in a script that deliberately defied Hollywood convention by treating an entire company of soldiers as its protagonist. Miller was then taken aside by an old movie hand, Laurence Stallings, who in an earlier incarnation had written *What Price Glory?* with Maxwell Anderson. Stallings had a wooden leg—he had left the real one in France during the last war—so Miller was flattered to hear that his script was "surprisingly good, considering you've never been in battle." But having done his quota of buttering-up, Stallings casually added that the studio would never shoot what Miller had written, because "all war movies, Arthur, are the same movie. There is a big guy and a little guy; they are different sizes so you can recognize them quickly in the smoky battle scenes. There is a girl whom one of them gets, but it's the other guy she loves, and she finally gets *him*. In the end they have to leave her behind because she's a foreigner, and it breaks your heart. One of them can get shot, preferably in the arm, or a wound that requires a head bandage."

Back in Hollywood a few years later to launch a movie about gangsterism on the Brooklyn waterfront, Miller had to be set wise once again, this time by the redoubtable Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures. Cohn had O.K.'d the project on the condition that Miller and his director, Elia Kazan, work for no money down. But since the script dealt with unions, Cohn took the precaution of having it vetted by Hollywood's own pre-eminent labor authority, Roy Brewer, and after talking it over with Brewer he requested a minor alteration. Make the gangsters Communists, Cohn said, and all would be well. (It was as if the script of *Jaws* had been submitted to an actual shark, who had politely asked the writer to make the title character a salmon.) Kazan, according to Miller, did not express any objection to the Brewer/Cohn proposal, thus leaving it to Miller

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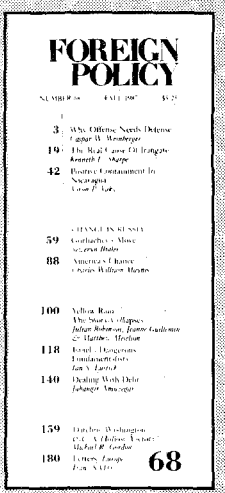

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to point out that so far as he knew there *were* no Communists in positions of power on the Brooklyn waterfront. But the last word came from Cohn, in the form of a telegram that reached Miller on his return to New York: "ITS INTERESTING HOW THE MINUTE WE TRY TO MAKE THE SCRIPT PRO-AMERICAN YOU PULL OUT. HARRY COHN."

It is hard for anyone much younger than Miller to appreciate what a large figure he cut in those years, when the country had a trickle-down culture and Broadway was still a spring that fed many rivers—and when, as he observes, "it was still imagined that with the possible exception of a doctor saving a life, writing a worthy play was the most important thing a human being could do." It would be laughable now for a serious playwright to think of writing for "an audience representing, more or less, all of America." It wasn't laughable after the triumph of *Death of a Salesman* in 1949. Indeed, Miller was so intoxicated by the universality of the stage that he would write about almost anybody (Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, WASP-Americans, policemen, dockworkers, street gangs, salesmen) before he would write—as he finally did in *The American Clock*, produced in 1980—about a Jewish-American family like his own.

The theater taught him to regard his writing as inviolable. "The very idea of someone editing a play of mine or so much as changing a word was enough to make my skin crawl," he writes. (The lesson seems to have stuck—that would explain how such a droopy title as *Timebends* survived the editing process.) From such a roost, he could and did scorn the temptations of the movie business, and when he married Monroe—a stage god marrying a screen goddess—he must have been tempted to see himself as the man who would rescue her from the degradations of Hollywood.

Miller's stories become more painful, as one would expect, when Monroe enters the picture. He portrays her as a woman who kept lurching from this savior to that, building them up and knocking them down. (Only the Arthur Murrays of method acting, Lee and Paula Strasberg, managed to remain in Monroe's perpetual good graces, by the simple device of making that their overriding aim.) Miller views Monroe's tragedy as a consequence, in part, of the assumption—the culture's and therefore hers, too—that "sex and seriousness could not exist in the same woman." This strikes me as a reasonable point; in fact, everything he has to say about Monroe is reasonable, including a brief and caustic discussion of the quickie book that Norman Mailer, in a particularly low moment, extracted from the slag heap of Monroe mania. Yet her voice is strangely subdued here, and there are gaps that speak volumes.

From the bad dream of the 1950s, Miller woke up to find himself occupying a distinctly smaller place in the theater and the theater occupying a distinctly smaller place in the culture. This was a lot to swallow, and he hasn't altogether swallowed it. He reprimands Broadway for its inability to support good as well as great plays—as though Broadway were a dog that could be ordered around. On the other hand, he has little or nothing to say about the systemic forces, such as television, which have drawn writers and audiences elsewhere.

Looking back on his successes and failures, Miller tends to take the praise at face value while attributing the criticism to any number of obstacles that have kept people from seeing the merit of his work. If a play fared badly on Broadway, one can count on reading about a later production in London or Moscow where everything fell into place and the audience was transfixed. Nor has he omitted the playwright's obligatory discourse on uncomprehending critics and the power and self-importance of *The New York Times*—a problem that, from his account, one might assume is limited to the world of the theater.

It would have made for more suspenseful reading if Miller had ripped into one of his own works, or speculated about why his sort of playwrighting resonated so powerfully in the 1940s and 1950s but not in the 1960s and 1970s. But sometimes the edifice of self-confidence is constructed in such a way that every wall is structural. A playwright less sure of himself than Miller might not have gone on writing after what he went through. He not only went on writing but, after assuming the presidency of PEN in 1966, had a hand in a quite astonishing feat of political organizing: the creation of a world community of writers bound by something like undeluded idealism.

As a playwright, Miller has made a habit of studying the mental experience of those who "could not quite make it aboard the American Century, that train

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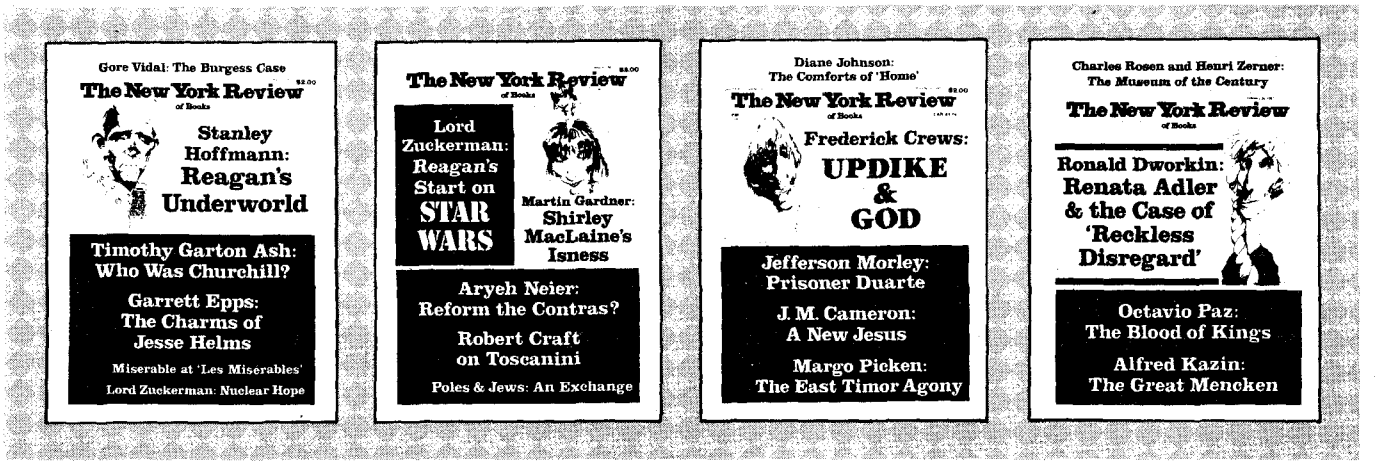
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one sensed was bound for nowhere, its tracks ending in the desert where the vast pauperized majority of mankind lived." The language may be a bit thick, but the concern is right on, and could hardly be timelier. In a decade devoted to maintaining (among as much of the population as possible, for as long as possible) the calm self-absorption that is conducive to getting and spending, Miller's plays are enjoying a revival. It is good to have him with us. □

Delirious New York

JOHN LEONARD

THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES. *By Tom Wolfe. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 659 pp. $19.95.*

IN SEARCH OF NEW YORK. A Special Issue of *Dissent. Edited by Jim Sleeper. 240 pp. $5.*

I. The Way We Are

We live in this imaginary city, a novel that needs a rewrite, where the only politicians not in jail probably ought to be, except for Ruth Messinger, and all of them are Democrats; where the unions don't care, and the schools don't work, and the cops deal drugs, and the Mayor has his own foreign policy and I can't leave home without stepping over the body of a runaway or a derelict. We didn't elect Felix Rohatyn to anything, but the Municipal Assistance Corporation is more important than the City Council. Nor did we vote for Steinbrenner, Trump or the rest of the bullies and crybabies who bray on our battlements and wave the bloody pennants of their imperial omophagous selves—and yet Mort Zuckerman will have his Zuckermandias at Columbus Circle, his finger in the sun, on the same Coliseum site from which Robert Moses before him dispossessed an entire neighborhood; and because none of these heroes ever takes the subway, there's no one to shoot them. Maybe we need Jeremiah more than we need Tom Wolfe or a bunch of disappointed intellectuals.

But Wolfe and *Dissent* have written their New York City novels anyway. Wolfe, the parajournalist, looks pretty much the same as always, still grinning at us out of the nimbus of his double-breasted signature white suit, a vanilla-colored Mau Mau. *Dissent*, on the other hand, has had a format face-lift and for the first time in thirty-three years you can read the socialist quarterly without an O.E.D. magnifying glass. In both their novels, the underclass is the stuff of dreams, the return of the repressed, a history-making black magic. They disagree, of course, on whether this is a good thing. Listen to Wolfe:

> You don't think the future knows how to cross a *bridge*? And you, you WASP charity-ballers sitting on your mounds of inherited money up in your co-ops with the twelve-foot ceilings and the two wings, one for you and one for the help, do you really think you're impregnable? And you German-Jewish financiers who have finally made it into the same buildings, the better to insulate yourselves from the *shtetl* hordes, do you really think you're insulated from the *Third World*?

Dissent wants this very same Third World—2.5 million "newcomers" since 1965—to be an energizing principle. In diversity we've always found our jumping beans. From the abrasions of culture on culture, we rub up a public philosophy and a civic space. Surely these new immigrants, this ethnic muscle, will rescue us from a mood grown "sullen, as if in contempt of earlier feelings and visions" and "a peculiar kind of social nastiness" (Irving Howe); a "trained incapacity to see the city as a human environment, or as anything more than a machine for generating money" (Marshall Berman); "a way of life that is not much better than jungle warfare" (Ada Louise Huxtable); and "a world devised in its entirety by Dostoevski's Smerdyakov" (Paula Fox).

It's odd that Wolfe is so much better than *Dissent* on the details of class animus. Whereas *Dissent* can barely bring itself to mention the cops, Wolfe goes underground into the criminal justice system, where the hatred is naked. If *Dissent* is too polite these days to call anybody an out-and-out racist, Wolfe has been to some fancy dinner parties and taken notes, like Saint-Simon, and bites the hand that scratches his ears, like Truman Capote. It's equally odd that Ed Koch, who certainly deserves it, is all over the pages of *Dissent*, while Wolfe entirely ignores him. A New York novel without Koch is like a court without a Sun King. Even Danny Ortega took time out to rub Crazy Eddie's lucky hump.

But there are many oddities. Neither New York novel has much of anything to say about drugs or organized crime. Both mention Alexander Cockburn.

II. Vanities

Sherman McCoy is a 38-year-old Yalie who decided to sell bonds on Wall Street instead of going into his father's good-bones law firm. He made almost $1 million last year, but when he sits down in his Ox-blood Moroccan leather swivel chair in front of the tambour door of his *faux*-Sheraton TV cabinet, he's still broke, because of his $2.6 million tenth-floor Park Avenue duplex, a Southampton house on Old Drover's Mooring Lane, a wife who decorates her interiors with Thomas Hope chairs, three servants, a handyman, club dues, car insurance for the Mercedes and private-school tuition for cute little Campbell, who, "supremely ladylike in her burgundy Taliaferro jumper and blazer and white blouse with a buttercup collar," bakes bunny rabbits in the kitchen and writes short stories about sad koala bears.

Sherman also has a bimbo. Wolfe's no better than Bill Buckley at heavy breathing, but he knows enough to borrow from his betters. Poor-white Southern-trashy Maria—the faithless wife and merry widow—slinks right out of a 1940s detective novel into Sherman's nerveless arms. "Her medium was men . . . the way a . . . dolphin's medium is the sea." At the wheel of Sherman's Mercedes, at night on an off-ramp in darkest Bronx, Maria will hit, run down and run away from a young, black, fatherless "honor student" from the nearby bombed-out projects, and Sherman of course will be blamed.

This malefaction will excite a black demagogue, the Rev. Reginald Bacon of Harlem; a white, Kunstler-like attorney, the radically chic Albert Vogel; an English reporter for a Murdoch-minded tabloid, the alcoholic Peter Fallow; a Jewish D.A. up for re-election in a Bronx that's 70 percent black and Hispanic, the publicity-hungry Abe Weiss; a Jewish assistant D.A. who'd rather be an Irish cop, the horny and impoverished Law-

John Leonard is the television critic for New York *magazine, a weekly columnist for* New York Newsday *and teaches writing at Columbia University.*

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rence Kramer; and assorted Communists, "the lesbos and the gaybos," welfare bums and fluffy-headed TV nightly news anchorpeople.

Poor Sherman. In his rent-controlled love nest, he's menaced by the landlord's hired Hasidic muscle ("These . . . unbelievable people . . . could now walk into his life"). When the cops ("insolent . . . Low Rent . . . *animals*") come to take him to the Bronx for his arraignment ("*the brutes* from the outer boroughs"), they are driving an Oldsmobile Cutlass! When he looks down from his tenth-floor co-op, a black mob is howling for his blue blood. (The *Other* is gaining on *him*!)

Only Tom Wolfe could descend into the sewers of our criminal justice system and find for his hero a *white* victim in a city where Bernie Goetz gets six months, John Gotti and Ray Donovan walk, Robert Chambers blames the victim and Eleanor Bumpers and Michael Stewart are still dead. Only Wolfe could want to be our Balzac and yet not notice the real-estate hucksters and the homeless nor send a single one of his characters to a concert, movie, play, museum, Chinese restaurant or all-night delicatessen. So the women are Tinkertoys, the blacks corrupt cartoons, the sex silly and the homophobia tedious, the politics a surly whelp of Evelyn Waugh and Joseph de Maistre and the author less amusing than he was when he trashed modern art. Nobody's perfect.

But on several subjects, all but disdained by *Dissent*, Wolfe can really sweat our socks.

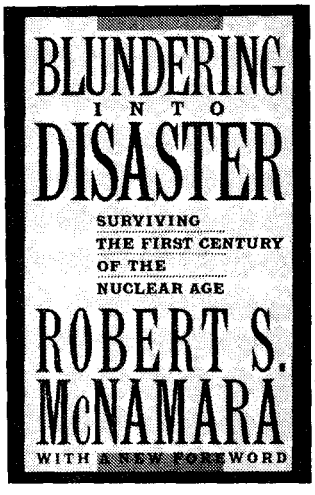
III. The "Delirious Professions" . . . Fear . . . and . . . Shoes

By the "delirious professions," Paul Valéry meant "all those trades whose main tool is one's opinion of one's self, and whose raw material is the opinion others have of you." In other words, Creative People, who in New York are not merely artists, writers, actors, dancers and singers but journalists, editors, critics, TV and radio producers, anchorpeople and talk-show hosts, noisy professors of uplift or anomie, vagabond experts on this week's Rapture of the Deep at the 92nd Street Y, even (gasp) advertising account execs and swinging bankers and yuppies in red suspenders on the stock exchange. Each is asked every minute of the day to be original: *unique*. Only then will they be lifted up by their epaulets to Steinbrenner's box in the stadium sky, there to consort with city presbyters the likes of the late Roy Cohn, where you can't tell the pearls from the swine.

Dissent isn't interested in these people, these vanities and their white suits and their bonfires. When *Dissent* nods at the market, it's merely to observe that "a multi-billion dollar, cost-plus, militarized economy virtually guaranteed spectacular profits to investors in the West and South" (Berman). When it mentions the media at all, it's only to complain of their role in a "bipartisan incumbent-protection society" and their "'objective' contempt" for politics as anything other than "sport" (Jim Chapin), or to make fun of *Manhattan, inc.* and *Spy* (Brian Morton). Where, for heaven's sake, is an analysis of *The Times*? How come *Newsday* was the only daily to oppose the re-election of Al d'Amato (whom Irving Howe calls "picklehead")? For *Dissent* the delirious professions belong merely, anonymously, to a "service sector" as remote from the new Third World as Mars.

Yet these are the people, making images and taste and deals, who write the city's *Zeitgeist*, the heat waves and cold fronts and snow jobs and acid rain of our

"McNamara's contribution to 21st century sanity."—Chicago Sun-Times



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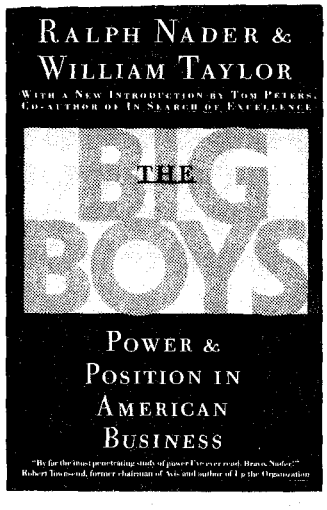

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emotional weather. Without their complicity, there will be no change. Change needs better P.R. Dazzle them—mostly male and mostly pale—into a militant sentience. At least take seriously their many failures of intelligence and character.

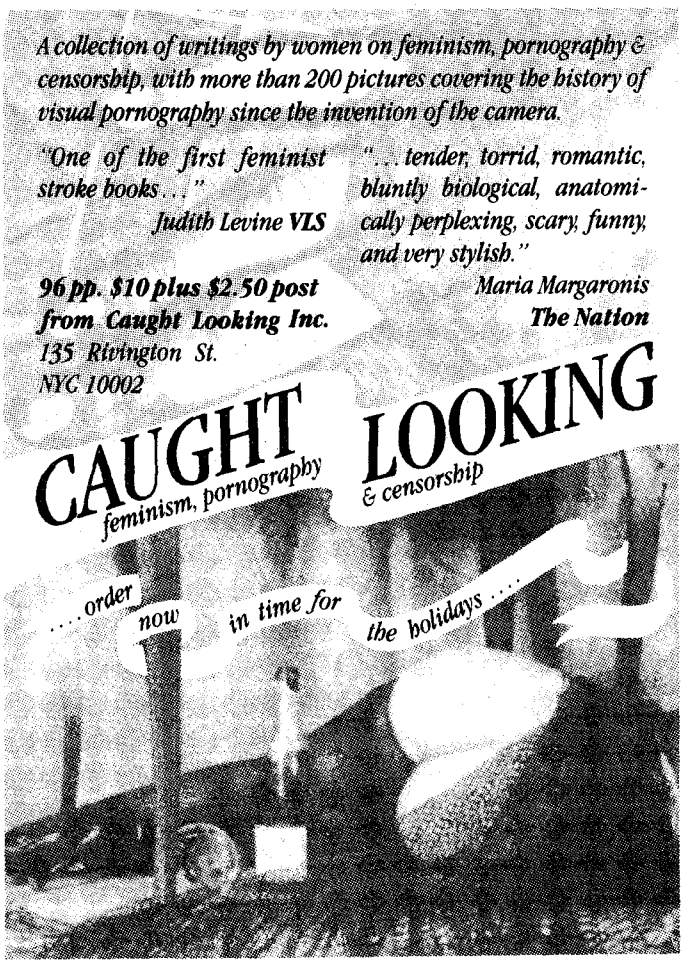
And Wolfe can't get enough of them. "They were moving about in an agitated manner and sweating early in the morning and shouting, which created the roar. It was the sound of well-educated young white men baying for money on the bond market." Pre-staggered cash flows! Convertible asset management! Capital-sensitive liquidity ratios! He's got their number: "He was wearing a covert-cloth Chesterfield topcoat with a golden brown velvet collar and carrying one of those burgundy leather attaché cases that came from Mädler or T. Anthony on Park Avenue and have a buttery smoothness that announces: 'I cost $500.'" He obviously knows his way around *The New York Post*, where he decided that the press are "fruit flies," the TV types are print-dependent bubble-brains (although demonstrators only show up to protest the latest outrage when they're sure the camera's rolling) and "dancers, novelists, and gigantic fairy opera singers [are] nothing but court jesters" to the bond-selling "Masters of the Universe."

Wolfe knows, too, that his delirious professionals—"frisky young animal[s] . . . of that breed whose natural destiny it was . . . to have what they wanted!"—are scared to death, especially on the subway: "Into the car came three boys, black, fifteen or sixteen years old, wearing big sneakers with enormous laces, untied but looped precisely in parallel lines. . . . They walked with a pumping gait known as the Pimp Roll. . . . They drew closer, with the invariable cool blank look. . . . Such stupid self-destructive macho egos."

It's the attitude. Compare Wolfe's to a lovely riff from Wesley Brown in *Dissent*: "a display of bravado by a young, indigo-skinned black male, moving through a crowded subway car like a point guard bringing the ball up the court, sporting a haircut that makes the shape of his head resemble a cone of ice-cream, and wearing barge-sized sneakers with untied laces thick as egg noodles, is immediately considered a dangerous presence whether he is or not." By whom? By delirious professionals. On the subway, the First World and the Third coincide, at least until the express stop at Columbus Circle.

They are afraid, too, that what they do is make-believe; that their luck and their charm will run out; that they will look in the mirror one morning and see, if not the other side of the room, then maybe something no longer brand-new and unique, someone *found out*, like Sherman. They will lose their co-op and our good opinion. As cops and press and mob close in on Sherman, his megabucks Paris deal on Giscard bonds is also falling apart and his panic is palpable. (Nobody writing for *Dissent* seems to be afraid; angry, maybe, or tired, or sad or contemptuous, but not scared.) Wolfe makes us sweat. As bad as he is on sex, he's terrific on money, and hangovers, and . . . *shoes*.

There are no shoes in *Dissent*. There are two references to "shoemakers," but that's just left-wing atavism. Whereas shoes are Wolfe's big story, from "the Boston Cracked Shoe look" to Maria's "electric-blue lizard pumps with white calf caps on the toes" to Sherman's infamous $650 bench-made half-brogued English New & Lingwoods with the close soles and beveled insteps. Shoes for Wolfe are character. Sherman's dandified defense attorney wears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brown suede shoes. Assistant D.A. Kramer wears Johnson & Murphy "clodhoppers." A witness for the prosecution is partial to snow-white Reeboks, but they make him change into leather loafers for the grand jury. Ballet slippers or "go-to-hell" sneakers with Velcro straps, Wolfe's gone that extra mile and worn them.

What does this mean? More than you think. I've consulted Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* and Kurella's *Naturgeschichte des Verbrechers*. I know more than I ought to about high-buttoned patent-leather boots, "Hungarian high-heels," the legend of Aschenbrödel, the toe-sucking (and later beatified) Marie Alacoque, foot fetishists East (Junichiro Tanizaki) and West (Restif de la Bretonne), not to mention vampirism, anthropophagy and coprolagnia, and not even to think about "shoes of the fisherman" Christian symbolism. On one level, the meaning of shoes in Wolfe is upward mobility—we are what we feet—but there is of course a subtext. Not one, but two Primal scenes in *Bonfire* make this obvious.

The young men baying for money on the bond market spend most of their time with their mouth on a telephone and their shoes in a stirrup. Sherman loves it: Felix, the middle-aged black shoeshine man,

> was humped over . . . stropping Sherman's right shoe, a New & Lingwood half-brogue, with his high-shine rag. . . . Sherman enjoyed the pressure of the rag on his metatarsal bones. It was a tiny massage of the ego, when you got right down to it—this great strapping brown man, with the bald spot in his crown down there at his feet, stropping, oblivious of the levers with which Sherman could move another nation, another continent, merely by bouncing words off a satellite.

But the Master of the Universe will be punished. Shoes in Wolfe's novel are like the guns in Chekhov's plays, that have to go bang. Before Sherman is fingerprinted in the Bronx, he is made to stand outside in the rain and soak his New & Lingwoods. And before he's tossed in the holding pen, where surly men of color want to wrinkle his friskiness, he is made to remove his belt *and his shoelaces*, "like two little dried dead things." His pants fall down and his shoes fall off and he has to *shuffle*: "The shoes made a squishing sound because they were so wet." At the end of *Bonfire* he changes into hiking boots and we know why. Shoes are sex.

IV. There Are More Than Three Worlds

From Wolfe, you wouldn't know that we've got one big problem with real-estate developers and another with the homeless. For *Dissent*, these are strophe and antistrophe, as in an old Greek choral ode, with everybody moving right to left and back again. To be sure, Deborah Meier, the heroine of District 4, has important things to say about "teaching for testing" and alternative schools; and Maxine Phillips would like to pay for the care of our 60,000 children who are abused or neglected each year by taxing cooperative apartments like Sherman McCoy's; and Theresa Funicello is furious at "workfare," wondering why "a black woman hired as a nanny for an upper-class white family is a 'worker,' [while] a mother struggling under adverse conditions to raise her own children on welfare . . . is a parasite on society"; and Anthony Borden points out that 55 percent of all our AIDS victims are black or Latino, and so are 90 percent of our AIDS children, who never had a chance to say no to anything; and Gus Tyler looks at what happened to

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labor-intensive light manufacturing in this city (it went to Korea and Taiwan); and Michael Oreskes follows the garment industry to nonunion sweatshops in Chinatown or Queens; and Jewel Bellush explains "room at the top" for black women in organizing hospital, school and clerical workers; and John Mollenkopf can't find a "good government" reform movement anywhere.

Moreover, *Dissent*'s a lot more cultured than Wolfe. This novel has a chapter by Paul Berman on the sexual confusion and political ambivalence of those "prisoner[s] of culture" who live below Fourteenth Street and therefore have to read Kathy Acker, look at David Salle, listen to Peter Gordon and go to plays by Albert Inauratto; and a chapter by Juan Flores on the convergence of black and Puerto Rican cultures in "hip-hop," by way of Bo Diddley, Joe Cuba, Frankie Lymon, doo-wop, *capoeira*, break-dancing and rap; and a chapter by Ellen Levy on group theater versus performance art. And then it's Memory Lane: Michael Harrington, who may have less to be ashamed of than any other man of the left I know, admires Ruth Messinger and tries hard to remember when Crazy Eddie was a liberal. Morris Dickstein and Robert Lekachman feel bad and write agreeably about the Upper West Side and our favorite slumlord, Columbia University. Rosalyn Drexler and Leonard Kriegel go back to the Bronx (all that Art Deco on the Grand Concourse), and Kriegel finds a whole new *Irish* community Wolfe must have missed while soaking Sherman's shoes. Alfred Kazin has fun spanking such avatars of agitprop as N. Podhoretz, A. Cockburn, H. Kramer and G. Vidal, and then he gets serious: "When the great Reagan counterrevolution is over, what I shall remember most is the way accommodating intellectuals tried to bring to an end whatever was left among Jewish intellectuals of their old bond with the oppressed, the proscribed, the everlasting victims piled up now in every street."

Which brings us back to the grubby and the brutish. Marshall Berman itemizes everything Tom Wolfe never noticed:

> spectacular giveaways to real estate developers; the attacks on the poor, depriving them of industrial work, low-income housing, public hospitals. . . . the casual brutality that has come to permeate our public life, as in the recent wave of mass arrests to drive homeless people out of the railway terminals that the city's own development policies have driven them into; the triumphal march of the city's rejuvenated political machines, whose movers . . . have made the 1980s one long carnival of white-collar crime; the rescue of the city from the clutches of a hostile federal government, by selling it (or giving it away) to rapacious real estate empires that will tear down anything or throw up anything, if it pays; the long-term transformation of New York into a place where capital from anywhere in the world is instantly at home, while everybody without capital is increasingly out of place.

In this corner: the Cross-Bronx Expressway, the Coliseum, Lincoln Center, Westway, Zuckermandias, Trump Television City, Times Square as Alphaville and Disney World. In the opposite corner: the homeless—the usual ghosts, of course, on the brownstone stoop with the little green bottles, and the bag lady who reads *Vogue* and the portly sociopath with the green beret and the 8-inch pigsticker, as well as the ambassador of this month's designer-zombie mushroom, nodding off on his way to where the action isn't. But they were our regulars, and they've been overwhelmed by a deindustrialized proletariat, a ragged army of the dispossessed, a supply-side migratory tide of angry beggars and runaway refugee children and almost catatonic nomads. Have you seen the cold-water, crime-ridden, disease-spreading shelters in which we warehouse these dropouts and castaways? They are safer on the streets, except for Crazy Eddie and his net. In the parks, of course, we burn them alive.

There are an estimated *100,000* homeless in the imperial city today. In the last 20 years—the years of the 2.5 million "newcomers"—housing production has *decreased* from 60,000 new units in 1966 to 7,000 in 1985 (Huxtable). Twenty-five percent of us live below the poverty line. At the end of World War II there were a million jobs in New York City light industries; today it's down to 400,000. White unemployment is 7.2 percent; for blacks, 11.5 percent; for Hispanics, 13.4 percent; among the white young, 22.5 percent; and for the black young, 47.9 percent (Tyler)—*47.9*, all of them Pimp Rolling on Tom Wolfe's subway.

Meanwhile, why do you suppose that real-estate developers, brokerage houses and their law firms forked out over $4 million in 1985 campaign contributions to Koch and the other seven members of the Board of Estimate? Maybe because Koch and the board have given

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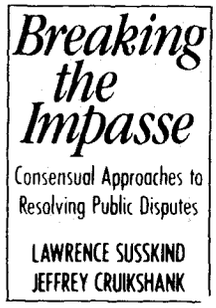

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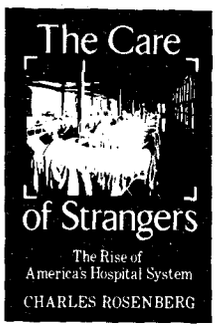

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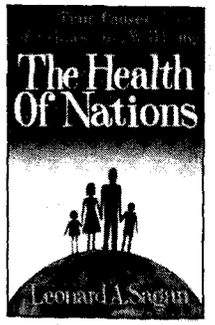

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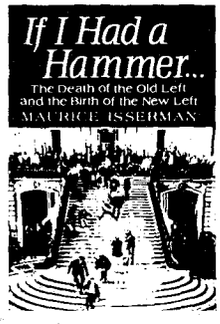

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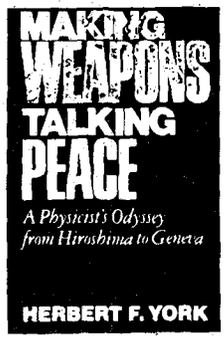

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these same people $1.3 billion in property tax breaks and zoning variances since 1978 (Jim Sleeper). Since 1981, we have as much new commercial space—45 million square feet—as the total commercial space of Boston and San Francisco combined (Sleeper), and yet there's still no room for the homeless. There isn't even any room for a simple idea like San Francisco's: in San Francisco you can't put up new commercial space downtown unless you pay for day-care for the children of the people who will work there (Messinger). Of course the Reagan Administration won't invest in permanent housing for New York's poor: *that* would be socialism, the dreaded "S word." But Crazy Eddie doesn't want unions or churches or foundations or grass-roots community groups or anybody else (except his favorite developers) in the business of rehabilitating the 100,000 vacant properties the city already owns. Nor are a big developer's tax breaks available to these groups. Why not? Maybe because this kind of low-cost community initiative is bad for the Profit Motive and the Power Base. Certainly permanent housing for the poor—the ever-unpopular "free ride"—is bad for the Work Ethic, like Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

It's not just the money. It's a social philosophy which is at the same time greedy and punitive. We might scrounge the money. Messinger reminds us of that mysterious $500 million in unspent revenues—mostly from "Big MAC," World Trade Center and Battery Park City surpluses—that the city "rolls over" every fiscal year until it disappears whenever anyone wants to spend it on basic decencies. Dan McCarthy can find another half-billion in a capital-gains tax on real estate. If we tax cooperative apartments for mortgage-recording and real-property transfers, as Phillips suggests, that's another $60 million. Just suppose we killed off "gratuitous tax abatements to Smith-Barney or A.T.&T.," decided to use the city's zoning clout to insist on social services, and helped low-income communities "establish themselves in properties the marketplace has abandoned" (Sleeper). We aren't talking here about anything so radically Scandinavian as income redistribution. But we *are* talking about more than anybody now in power has the conscience and commitment to attempt. What we need, of course, is a change of philosophy and philosophers.

For this change, *Dissent* looks to

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those 2.5 million "newcomers" with mixed feelings. We've been a "minority-majority" city since the middle of this decade—blacks and Puerto Ricans joined by Dominicans, Cubans and other Caribbeans and South Americans, plus Africans and 350,000 Asians. (The indefatigable Sleeper tells us that by 1995, "with revolution in Korea and the defenestration of Hong Kong," our Asian population will have tripled.) To this "Third World" of Tom Wolfe's swamp-fever dreams—Koreans in the fruit and vegetable trade, Indians in the newsstand business, Arabs in neighborhood groceries and head-shops, Senegalese street vendors—add 200,000 Russian Jews, Israelis, Poles, Italians, Greeks and the Irish in Kriegel's Bronx. That's a lot of clout waiting to be mobilized.

But Sleeper, Chapin and Philip Kasinitz are also cautionary tale-tellers. Blacks and Hispanics haven't got their act together, except in "hip-hop," even in Brooklyn. Many newcomers can't speak English, aren't citizens, aren't registered or aren't old enough to vote. Why should Korean shopowners in Washington Heights or Cuban doctors in Jackson Heights join a coalition that cares about the interests of welfare mothers in Bedford-Stuyvesant? It isn't Popular Front-romantic when blacks resent Koreans, the Russians are "rednecks," the Chinese won't join unions and the unions are mostly right-wing anyway. Chapin is cold-eyed: "Immigrant insurgencies are generally pluralist rather than radical in nature. Some are even regressive." He asks the left—census figures on this minority have been unavailable since the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact—to "stop mistaking ethnicity for politics; while ethnicity may be more important than class to voting, economics is more important to governing policy than ethnicity."

This doesn't exactly sing, but we'd better learn to hum it. To be sure, even the broadest coalition—of immigrants and intellectuals, teachers and preachers, limousine liberals and Republican "good government" types, low-income community organizers and "delirious professionals"—can't save the city all by itself. Even the Federal government (another bunch of once and future jailbirds) can't control oil prices or the dollar or the deficit or international drug traffic. No government in the world, says Marshall Berman, knows how to regulate "the vastly accelerated mobility of capital, propelled by breakthroughs

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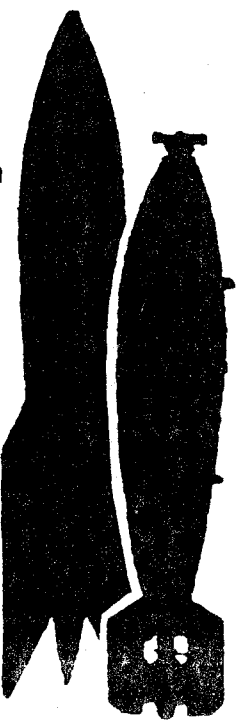

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in information technology" that "is fast bringing about the deindustrialization of America." But if we begin by being ashamed of ourselves and then start working the streets, we might find enough conscience and will to make over again the city Randolph Bourne once called "a federation of cultures."

On the other hand, tourism is up, from 3.3 million in 1975 to 17.5 in 1987. Just like Venice: a theme park. See the pretty Winter Palace. □

Mortal Moralities

MARILYN HACKER

THE SISTERS: New and Selected Poems. *By Josephine Jacobsen. The Bench Press. 132 pp. $18. Paper $9.*

ADIOS, MR. MOXLEY. *By Josephine Jacobsen. The Jackpine Press. 158 pp. $17.95. Paper $10.95.*

The work of Josephine Jacobsen is one of the best-kept secrets of contemporary American literature. She is a coeval of Auden and Roethke, Bishop, Miles and Rukeyser; though a late starter, her first book was published in 1940, her most recent ones this year and last. Unlike those others, she is still alive and writing. She shares with Bishop a passion for travel and a sense of being most at home somewhere radically else; with Miles, moral imperatives expressed through the quotidian, the anecdotal; with the later Auden, an aesthetic informed by faith; with Rukeyser, the theme of human interparticipation, the credo *nihil humanum a me alienum est*; with Roethke (and James Wright), the love for the human creature others would find grotesque, merely pitiable or fatally boring. She was Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress for six years and is a Fellow of the Academy of American Poets, but her work is not to be found in the Nortons, nor in the proliferation of women's/regional/aesthetic-affinity anthologies. Five of her six previous books of poetry are out of print. So I greet with great pleasure the appearance of her seventh book of poetry, *The Sisters*, and her second book of short fiction, *Adios, Mr. Moxley*.

Jacobsen is an idiosyncratic, unfashionable and accessible writer, whose work, neither polemical nor hermetic, eschews irony for the clarity of intelligence and ethical engagement. Her season is spring, her setting as often a hospital (for diseases of the body or the mind) as a beach, a hotel room or a church: places of passage, providing occasion for communication/communion, terror, sometimes epiphany. The old, the infirm, the nondescript celibate middle-aged of both genders are often her protagonists, her personae. The young appear at the perilous end of childhood, even in their twenties, with sexual and emotional initiation behind them; moral initiation, at any age, is Jacobsen's more likely focus.

Jacobsen's vision is tragic, and, in both her poetry and fiction, is made manifest most frequently in observations of the quotidian. Comfortable, unexceptionable interiorities are shattered by their intersection with others, with events overdetermined by race and class in ways the privileged sometimes deny. The sins of omission, of inattention, capture this writer's imagination, as do their apposite virtues: paying attention to conscience and the world; active *agape*, learned when there is time to change, to learn. In the story "Protection," a timid retired white man, puzzling the nature of gratuitous malice with which he has been confronted, inadvertently causes the murder of a black youth by the security guard whose racist assumptions he has challenged. In "The Mango Community," a sabbatical-year white family's dabbling in West Indian revolutionary politics leads to the crippling of their child's black best friend, who cannot choose, as they can, to stay or go, to be or not be involved. In a smaller instance of the same moral failure, in "Season's End," the trust of a likable, gifted Hispanic scholarship student is eroded by his teacher's own momentary lapse of trust; the two lose equally in being lost to each other.

The same cautionary theme is found in the poem "Instances of Communication," where the poet/persona herself, by evasion, generates despair:

> I drove five madwomen down a roaring redhot turnpike in a July
> noon; the one behind me had a fur
> ragged coat gathered about her in
> that furnace;
> she reached in the horrid insides of a
> purse and offered me a chocolate,
> liquid
> and appalling. "*Look! Look! A bird!*" I cried and flung it over the
> side,
> and munched my empty jaws as she
> turned back, and cried "*How good!*"
> And while the others hummed and
> cursed, and watched simply
> suddenly she put
> her lips—behind me—to my ear and
> soft as liquid chocolate came purling
> the obscene abuse. "*Hush, hush, Laura, hush*," said the nurse; "*the nice lady*
> *likes you*!" Laura did not believe so,
> and went on slowly, softly, with O
> such misery of hate.

And in lines as pared and paradigmatic as those above are seamlessly, deceptively anecdotal, she describes "The Terrible Naïve," who:

> omnipotently shrewd
> will whistle
> in mirrors; will wrestle,
> but only after
>
> securely lashing
> your wrists with
> their tough
> vulnerability.

There is an element of sexual conservatism in Jacobsen's stories: Unmarried lovers always end up badly, with a fatal flaw to the relationship laid bare ("The Mango Community," "The Ring of Kerry," "Motion of the Heart"); the refusal of marriage signals a refusal of commitment, responsibility. The one homosexual character (in "Motion of the Heart") deceives the young woman he would marry to "normalize" himself while urging on her an abortion, which she refuses, along with him, when the truth is (contrivedly) made known. Still, I have read enough stories of a man suppressing, then claiming, his gay identity, thus leaving a shadowy female character for whom no emotions or consequences are imagined, to find Jacobsen's point of view corrective. And the love of the housekeeper, Shauna, for asthmatic, androgynous Mrs. Adair, in "The Ring of Kerry," dwarfs at a glance the conditional connection of the story's heterosexual pair.

This conservatism, too, must be put in the context of Jacobsen's being a Roman Catholic writer, whose active faith informs her work, whose faith's enactment has provided her with subject matter. The mass is the final "instance

Marilyn Hacker's latest books are Assumptions *(Knopf) and* Love, Death and the Changing of the Seasons *(Arbor House). She is indebted to Florence Howe's introduction to* No More Masks *(Anchor) for suggesting the theme of duality in contemporary women's poetry.*

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of communication," celebrated on the Philadelphia docks in a

> cold great warehouse Sunday still,
> up still cold stairs, along
> a dark dim cold thin hall through a
> brown door into a small square
> room with lit
> peaky candles

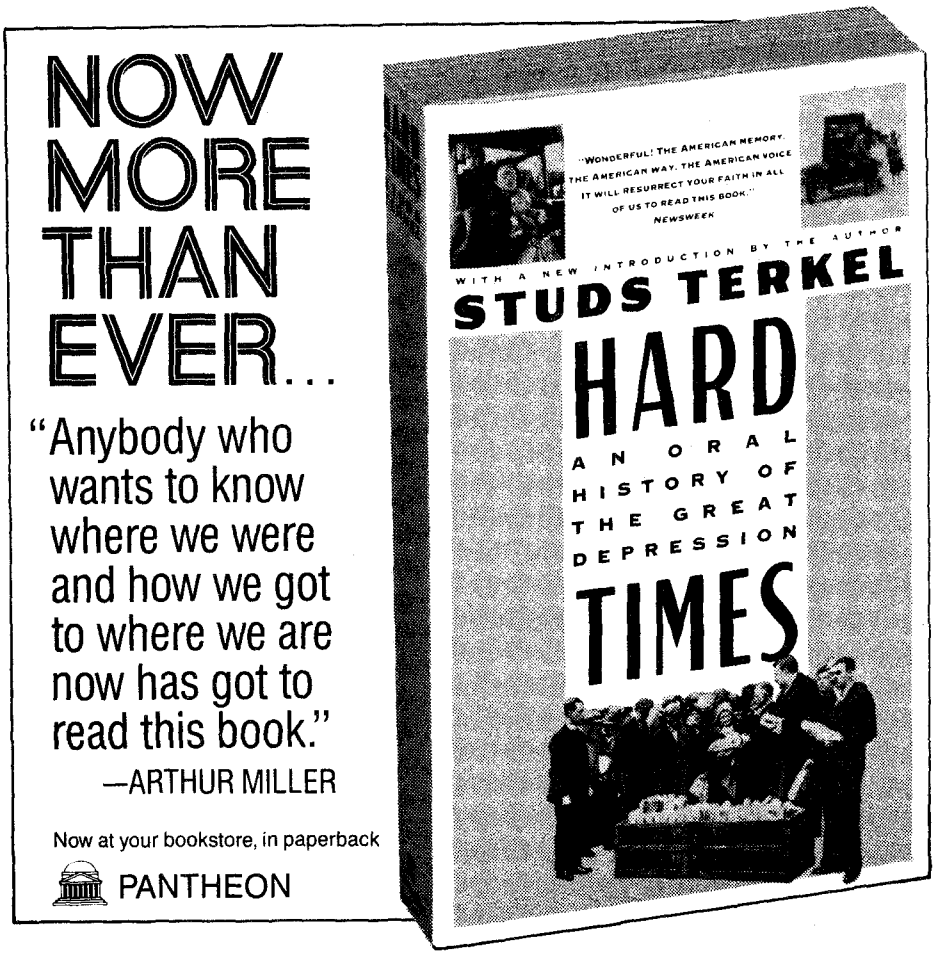
and in Jacobsen's beloved Grenada by "The black tall priest/his sash embroidered with nutmeg bursting/through its mace," at a service for the healing of the sick in "The Chosen." His beauty is no more finely observed than the peculiar grace of "The Chosen" themselves:

> The faces, color of cocoa, obsidian,
> sand,
> of bark, of nutmeg, are turned toward
> the door:
>
> the choir, quiet, seethes with intention. Now!
> Between two of the strong, the sick
> ones creep:
> lame, mostly; enormously tough and
> fragile,
> like dark, bent-over birds. Some
>
> spectacular ravages; but sadly, largely
> as it turns out, the undramatic wounds
> of age.
> They are lowered into chairs with
> dignity.
> A tiny old woman chatters, chatters.

The poem is not describing exotic others (a danger it skirts) but examining the unknowable human contract with the nonhuman:

> The healthy leave first,
>
> not to hurry the honored, in their slow
> return to familiar sheets. If the terms
> of the contract
> remain mysterious, it is signed. The
> chosen
> wait in their chairs for those not
> chosen.

The disabled, the retarded, the mentally and the terminally ill are frequent characters in Jacobsen's poetry and fiction. Two of the stories take place in hospitals on the eve of major surgery. But in "Adios, Mr. Moxley," quotidian connections, from passionate love to intense annoyance, fall away in the face of the mortal question, while in "Vocation" a woman recognizes and confronts what is, for Jacobsen, the human nadir: the passionless will to cause pain. Jacobsen's hospital is a Flemish painter's parlor; much is revealed on a small canvas. Mr. Mahoney, who roams the halls in the poem with his name, is a confused old man stripped to (but not of) his basic humanity by impending death: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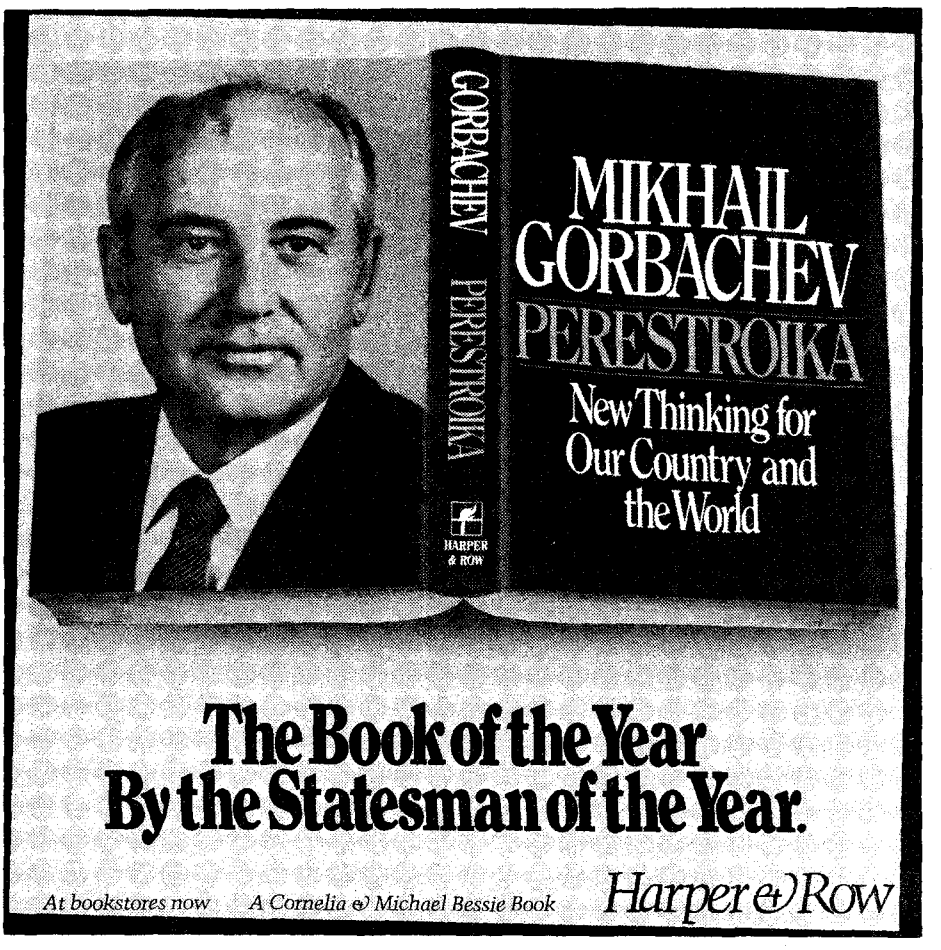

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At 2 A.M. in my dark 283
the wide door cracks, and sudden and silently
Mr. Mahoney's nutty face obtrudes.

It is gently snatched back by someone behind it.
"That is someone *else's* room. Yours is this way. . . ."

But Jacobsen writes about death and the knowledge of death (whence comes one kind of heroism) in many settings: a cocktail party, a suburban lane, the bank of a dam:

We talked of pelota; and how the tendrils of vines
Curl opposite ways in the opposite hemispheres.
My cousin was dying. By this I mean
The rate of his disengagement was rapid.

("I Took My Cousin to Prettyboy Dam")

In both these poems, the speaker is present as observer, her own life only intersecting with the drama enacted. But she is not a visitor in Room 283: She knows that she, too, at a less rapid rate of disengagement, is dying.

The title poem of *The Sisters* invites comparison by name and subject with several other texts. While gender and the condition of women as a class are not Jacobsen's primary subjects, they are not refused subjects; nor would Jacobsen refuse to be described as a woman poet, not only in the fact of her gender, but in her cross-generational relationship with a tradition.

"The Sisters" is also the title of an *ars poetica* by Amy Lowell, imagining in witty blank verse visits with Sappho, Barrett Browning and Dickinson, meditating on the "queerness" of "women who write poetry" and their/our interdependence. Since Lowell, a duality between or within women (in particular, between practicality and imagination, the analytic and the synthetic, sense and sensibility) has so often been the subject of women's poems as to constitute a recognizable theme, a genre like the elegy or the epithalamium. In Elinor Wylie's "Little Eclogue," sisters called Solitude and Loneliness, "One like a moth, the other like a mouse," are divided (with authorial irony) by romantic love. Thirty years later, in "In Mind," Denise Levertov contrasted a woman "smelling of/apples or grass" in a "utopian smock," "kind," who "has/no imagination," with a "turbulent moon-ridden girl/or old woman" "who knows strange songs" but "is not kind."

Jacobsen's "Sisters" are, at first reading, a less-metaphorical, fleshly pair at a Caribbean resort, rendered in five-line stanzas by an observer more neighborly than omniscient. Sister *B* is "easily pleased"; *A* is "erratic," given to investigations of the unexpected. "The little group of graves by the Old Men's Home" tempts her back:

to examine the yellow
and violet cellophane, the rubber pond-lilies
floating on dust; the whole glittering heap
of rainbow mound.

After her burst of energy (we do not read these as young sisters) she falls asleep on the beach, while *B* swims. But, the observer makes it clear, these sisters "recoil" at the thought of separation. "Before bed, *A* looked at herself in the mirror, using *B*'s eyes," and, while there is no mention of creator and nurturer, poet and muse, no overt statement that *A* and *B* are more than middle-aged spinsters on holiday, I read a synthesis here that could not yet have been made by Wylie or Levertov. The athletic, good-natured *B*, who exults in sunlight and lobsters, and the mercurial, curious *A*, whose imagination is awakened and exhausted by death, participate in each other willingly and surely as the nouns "solid as objects" complete the abstract "*who, why, go*" in poetry as on the sisters' Scrabble board. Woman and poet are not polar; they describe a whole.

For Jacobsen, the aims of a woman's art are those of an art committed to human survival: She is cool toward any art that is not. In "Food," woman's work is the irreducible basis of human possibility:

To trap, to kill, to drive
the dogs' ferocity is heroic to tell:
full-bellied sagas' stuff.

The clawing for heather, the black curved nails,
cramped breath for smoke, smoke for breath,
the witch mask clamped on the bride face

bring nothing but life for the nourished.

. . .

By her breath, flesh, her hands, no reputation will be made, no
saga descend. It is only the

next day made possible.

Josephine Jacobsen's writing makes the next day possible. □

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DOUG HENWOOD

THE LIFE OF THE PARTY. *By Robert Kuttner. Elisabeth Sifton Books/ Viking. 265 pp. $18.95.*

Democrats can reclaim their lost status as the natural majority party, according to Robert Kuttner, by returning to their populist roots. Rather than fall all over one another in an effort to appear more "responsible" than the next candidate, Gore, Dukakis, Gephardt, et al. should take advantage of the collapse of Reaganism to promote a resolutely progressive agenda that would lure nonvoters out of saloons and living rooms and chase the fading ghost of laissez-faire back to its nineteenth-century grave.

The recent electoral history of the party of Roosevelt has been dismal indeed. In the past nine elections, Republicans have won thirty-two states at least six times; only Minnesota and Washington, D.C., have been equally reliable for the Democrats. The last big Democratic victory was in 1964; since then the Democrats have lost with insiders, outsiders, liberals and moderates. The voter turnout has been declining for twenty years, which is bad news for the left-of-center party. (Outside the South, Kuttner notes, the turnout for the 1986 Congressional elections was the lowest since 1798.) Those who don't vote are the working classes and the poor—exactly the citizens the Democrats should focus on, instead of fruitlessly prospecting in the suburbs. The affluent cast a vote and a half for every vote the nonaffluent cast. This low turnout and the class skew are both unique in the industrialized world.

As Kuttner sees it, a progressive populist program could unite black and white, poor and middle-class, North and South, and make the Oval Office safe for Democrats again. The major elements of his platform are: national health insurance; lifetime education, including job training and upgrading; programs for the working family, such as day care; affordable housing, emphasizing first-time homeownership and co-op programs for apartment dwellers; meaningful work, not punitive workfare, for healthy welfare recipients; and a more "assertive" trade policy. Kuttner argues that new government programs should be universal; it is axiomatic, he notes, that programs targeted for the poor are poor programs. The appeal to universality stems from his allegiance to a frankly socialistic, communitarian ideal, not from a technocratic concern for efficiency. This is guaranteed to make Chuck Robb break out in a cold sweat, and for that reason must be regarded as a good thing.

Kuttner, the economics correspondent of *The New Republic*, describes his program as a natural extension of the Democratic Party's heritage—something that would tie up the loose ends of the New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier and Great Society. During the days of Democratic ascendancy, 1933–1968, we had a stable domestic and world economy; rising living standards; a stable, unionized work force; and an ideal of community that acknowledged there was more to life than the harsh discipline of the market. By turning their back on their past, Kuttner argues, the Democrats are currently tossing themselves into the dustbin of history.

This view of a populist Democratic Party as our native version of social democracy is sunny, to put it charitably. First of all, this thirty-five-year golden age included eight years of depression, five of world war, eight of Eisenhower and more than a decade of war in Korea and Vietnam. Of course the Democrats can't be blamed for all these ills, but remembering them will dispel unwarranted nostalgia.

And there are plenty of things the Democrats *can* be blamed for. As Mike Davis tells the story in his *Prisoners of the American Dream* (Verso/NLB), the party has consistently betrayed working people for the past century. Whenever labor got militant—whether it was the Knights of Labor in the 1880s or the C.I.O. in the 1930s—Democrats were there to contain, co-opt, sell out or purge the threat. It was New Deal Democratic governors who called out the National Guard to crush strikes; it was Harry Truman and the allegedly progressive postwar Democratic Congress that passed the Taft-Hartley bill and other repressive legislation designed to limit unionism to the narrowest of

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Doug Henwood is editor of Left Business Observer *and has written for* Grand Street *and* The Village Voice.

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goals. Truman and Co. scrapped Roosevelt's Economic Bill of Rights (which Kuttner mourns without attributing blame); broke strikes; purged the Administration of New Deal leftovers; unleashed the F.B.I. on Communists, real and imagined; and laid the groundwork for the permanent war economy. Far from betraying their history, modern Democrats are simply living up to its promise.

A closer look at Trumanomics is in order, since Kuttner praises the "crusty populist" and his economic adviser Leon Keyserling as friends of full employment and economic planning. Truman and Keyserling were the lead authors of military Keynesianism, the idea that a weapon a day keeps depression away. This ingenious (and geopolitically useful) domestication of Keynes's idea that government spending could counteract capitalism's tendency toward stagnation soothed the nervous reactionaries of the day, who recoiled at pure Keynesianism's mildly interventionist and redistributionist agenda. Truman also shelved proposals for national health insurance and rejected the C.I.O.'s proposed public housing program in favor of the current system of mortgage subsidies.

This system contributed greatly to the high cost of housing, which Kuttner rightly laments. In 1949 mortgage payments consumed 14 percent of a typical 30-year-old's income; by 1985 they took 44 percent. In spite of this Kuttner celebrates the Fair Deal's housing program. While it's political suicide to breathe a word against the American Dream of homeownership, somebody ought to do it. Though most people profess a hatred of speculation, housing inflation is practically the national religion, and the various Federal subsidies have allowed millions to participate in the mania of borrowing, waiting, trading up and more borrowing. Is over $2 trillion in residential mortgage debt—three times the level of commercial mortgages—a wise allocation of capital? Why should shelter, one of life's basic necessities, be such an arena for speculation? Kuttner, who laments the absence of communitarian ideology in the United States, should remember that Margaret Thatcher has energetically promoted homeownership as one of her central strategies for undermining Labor. How progressive is homeownership, U.S.-style?

Kuttner is a Keynesian populist, and

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the weaknesses of his program are those of populism and Keynesianism. First, populism. As Kuttner defines it, populism is a

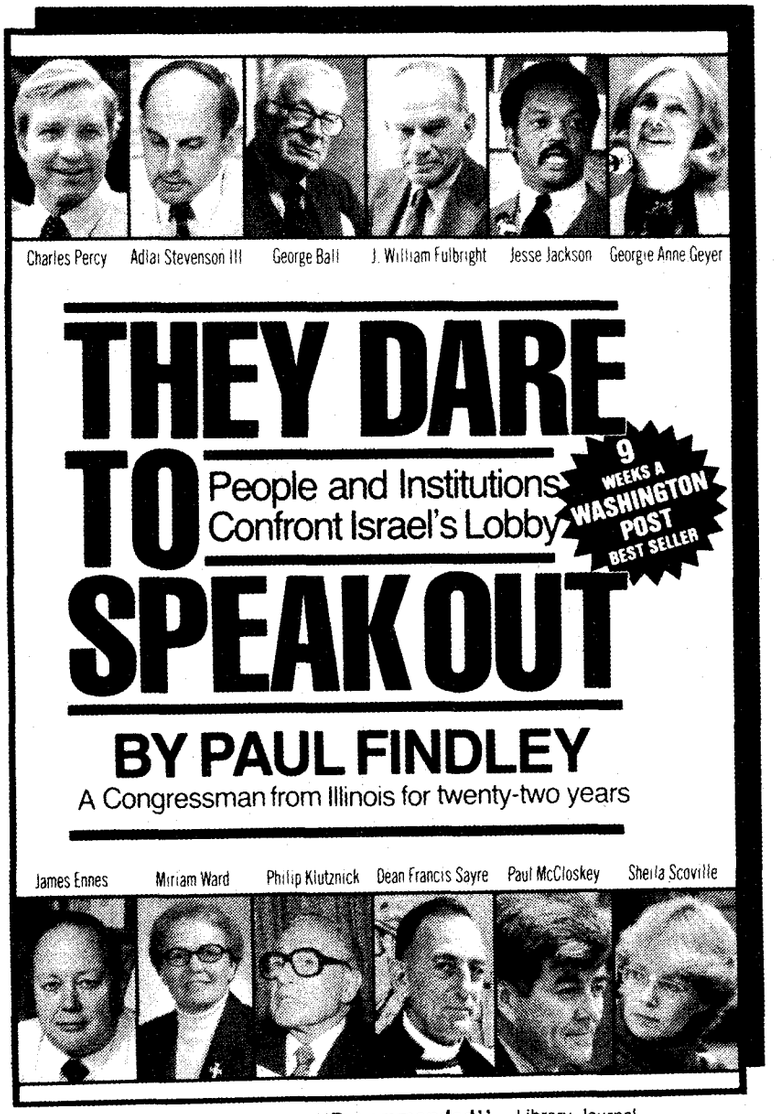
> home-grown, peculiarly conservative form of American economic radicalism, reflecting the demands of otherwise powerless groups, such as small farmers, for their fair share of the national economic product. It has fused demands for political empowerment with demands for economic justice. Populists have seen their constituents as victimized by distant economic organizations which they don't control—banks and absentee landlords and grain wholesalers—and fight to create local, democratically accountable economic institutions. . . . As an ideology, populism is problematic, because it has an ugly side.

These ugly features, which Kuttner freely acknowledges, include racism and parochialism. The populist sense of community is also problematic, since "community is both an inclusionary and an exclusionary concept." Populism has other faults as well, which Kuttner ignores—notably sentimentality and profound inconsistency. Populists profess to love competition but hate the concentration and consolidation of economic power it inevitably brings. They love capitalism, insofar as it lets them make a buck—but the moment a bigger fish comes in to feed, they call for government protection. Populists hate bankers but love easy credit. Relying on American populism to play the ideological role that social democracy plays in Europe is a dubious business. Relying on a parochial, suspicious ideology as the intellectual foundation of an inclusionary program is equally dubious.

The other problem is Keynesianism. Keynesian welfare capitalism is undeniably more humane than the current gloves-off variety but only insofar as a quarter-loaf is better than none. As Ernest Mandel has noted, Keynesians have spent most of their polemical time refuting neoclassical economics; they've more or less ignored their Marxist critics—and Kuttner's book is no exception. Thus Kuttner has a hard time explaining why the Keynesian welfare state is under attack worldwide. Growth slowed, he acknowledges—but, as he argues, the welfare state can't be blamed for that. Quite the contrary, claims Kuttner; the high-wage Keynesian model of the Democratic golden age fertilized the greatest episode of economic growth the world has ever known. Was it the mere perversity of capitalists that caused them to turn on it?

To a Marxist like Mandel, Keynesian medicine can be only a palliative, not a cure. Government can take up only so much of the slack for so long; in the end, business will always overinvest and overproduce. As the cumulative level of investment rises, it gets harder to turn a profit; world markets glut, stall and eventually collapse. Capitalism is thus undone by the very productivity it unleashes.

Business cares not a whit for the commonweal. If more money can be made by restricting output and cutting wages, then restrict and cut they will. Business tolerated the high-wage welfare state as the price of stability when times were fat, but when profitability began its long decline in the late 1960s, costs had to be cut, and wages and social benefits were easy targets. That this has happened worldwide, even under social democratic regimes, suggests that PACs, demographic changes and the growing sophistication of campaign image makers—Kuttner devotes more than half his book to rounding up these usual



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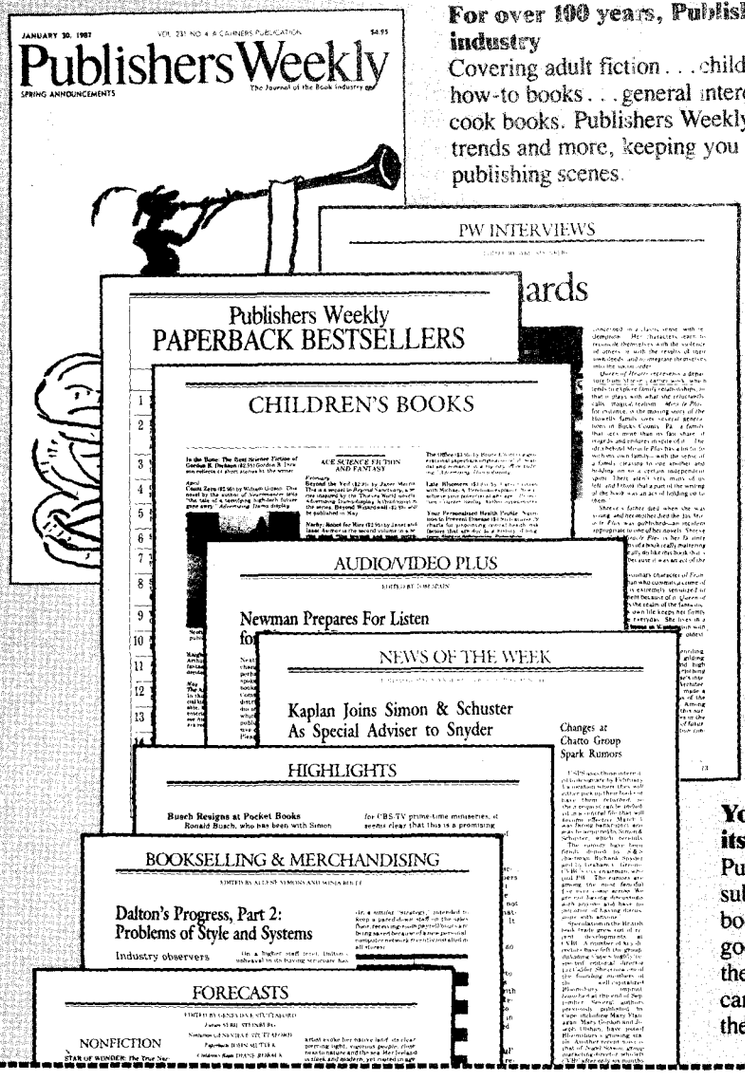

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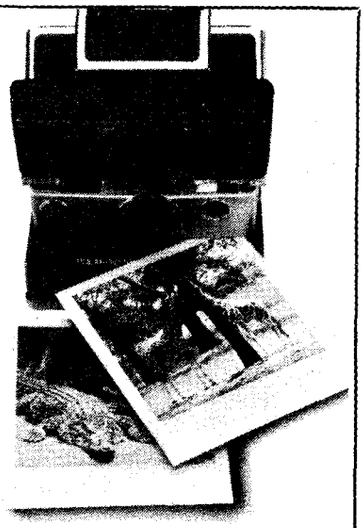

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suspects—can't fully explain the political economy of the Roaring Eighties.

The Marxist pedigree of this argument would make it the kiss of death for any analyst who, like Kuttner, wants to be taken seriously by power brokers and the mainstream media. (Kuttner contrasts *The Nation*, a "heroic" if "hermetic" journal written by and for the left, with his employer, the "feisty" *New Republic*, which seeks to "influence the mainstream debate *from* the left.") Yet European social democracy, which Kuttner admires, wouldn't exist without a history of radical agitation; plutocrats will only consent to reform when presented with the threat of their imminent demise. The two periods in our history when the Democrats were most like a European social democratic party—though the resemblance is fairly pale—were the 1930s and 1960s, when subversive humors were coursing through the body politic.

Anyone who offers a progressive agenda for the Democrats is a brave soul. There is much to be admired in this book; it is humane, well-written and clearly opposed to the foul temper of the times. Yet it is curiously cool to the Jackson campaign, which has brought the most radical agenda to mainstream politics in decades. Given the mortality rate among Democratic presidential candidates, I can understand Kuttner's reticence about being closely identified with any campaign. But nothing would shake up the Democrats' Beltway consensus more than Jackson's winning a few primaries. It's difficult to imagine the Democratic leadership adopting even a modestly social democratic program without an energized and unapologetic left forcing the issue. □

Frozen Music

EVAN EISENBERG

CHRONICLE IN STONE. *By Ismail Kadare. Translated from the Albanian. New Amsterdam Books/The Meredith Press. 277 pp. $17.95.*

Are cities natural? They have been around for six or seven thousand years. Farms and villages have been around for eleven thousand years; viewed through the million-year spectacles of the anthropologist, that is not much longer. It might even be argued that cities are more natural than farms, because they return us to the wilderness of our hunting and gathering past—that skyscrapers are our mahogany trees, supermarket aisles our foraging ranges, leveraged buy-outs our hunt.

For the young narrator of Ismail Kadare's *Chronicle in Stone*, the city is not only natural; it is very nearly human. It is the hero of his epic, the Christ of his Passion. In single combat it meets the Greeks, the Italians, the Germans, the rain-maddened river, the wind invading through the mountain passes, and survives. Here is how it looks in the first paragraph of the book:

> It was a strange city, and seemed to have been cast up in the valley one winter's night like some prehistoric creature that was now clawing its way up the mountainside. Everything in the city was old and made of stone, from the streets and fountains to the roofs of the sprawling age-old houses covered with grey slates like gigantic scales. It was hard to believe that under this powerful carapace the tender flesh of life survived and reproduced.

The city is Gjirokastër, founded in the fourth century, nursery of resistance to the Turks in the nineteenth, birthplace of Enver Hoxha and Ismail Kadare in the twentieth. It's a big city by Albanian standards, even in 1940, which is why the Italians and Greeks and Germans, the right-wing Ballists and the left-wing partisans are so hot to play musical chairs with it. Snaking uphill toward its ancient citadel, it is a country cousin of Kafka's Prague, a descendant of the cities of Sumer that sprawled in the dust before their ziggurats. Like the inner cities of Poland, its physical plant is stubbornly inorganic, with only the colloidal activities of mud to simulate life.

The *Iliad* is nominally the epic of Ilium, but for Homer the big city was an abstraction, a hand-tinted memory of Mycenaean splendor. Kadare is a city boy; so is his nameless narrator, who seems to beg that we call him Ismail. Watching the peasants' exodus at the end of a market day he is moved—like an inner-city kid who knows milk comes from cartons—to skepticism:

Evan Eisenberg is the author of The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography *(McGraw-Hill).*

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> To tell the truth I didn't really believe the villages existed. It seemed to me that the peasants were only pretending to go to their villages, while actually they weren't going anywhere, just crouching behind the scattered bush-covered hillocks around the city, waiting out the long week for another market day, when once again they would fill the streets with greenery, eggs, and the tinkling of bells.

It's not just that he is more comfortable with the inorganic but that he finds it more alive. If the Inuit know a thousand words for snow, Ismail knows as many for stone. He knows stone's shifting moods, its fortitude, its torments ("Thousands of roofs stretched away endlessly, steep and grey, as though they had turned over and over in a fitful sleep"). And he knows as much about its old enemy, water:

> Buried under my blankets, I listened to the muffled, monotonous sound of rain falling on the roof of our house. I pictured the countless drops rolling down the sloping roof, hurtling to earth to turn to mist that would rise again in the high, white sky. Little did they know that a clever trap, a tin gutter, awaited them on the eaves. Just as they were about to make the leap from roof to ground, they suddenly found themselves caught in the narrow pipe with thousands of companions, asking "Where are we going, where are they taking us?" Then, before they could recover from that mad race, they plummeted into a deep dark underground prison, the great cistern of our house.
>
> Here ended the raindrops' life of joy and freedom. In the dark and hollow cistern they would recall with dreary sorrow the great spaces of sky they would never see again, the strange cities below them, and the lightning-ripped horizons.

Writing like this is hard to stop quoting. It is not only beautiful; it is, in some subterranean sense, true. "Spinoza says that if a stone projected through the air had consciousness, it would imagine it was flying of its own will. I add merely that the stone would be right." Schopenhauer wrote those outrageous words; and if we accept his notion that of all the arts, only music fully perceives the will in all things, then we can say that Kadare's writing is musical. It is musical not only in the rhythms that survive in this deft (but uncredited) translation but in its most elemental perceptions.

Even Homer catnaps, and occasionally Kadare's formulas lose their incantatory power. But it is remarkable that his images, no matter how farfetched, so rarely seem strained or arbitrary or avant-garde. He can stretch a conceit for miles. Just when you think it's about to snap, he cuts it with an offhand swipe and starts again:

> I started looking at the old woman's wrinkles and was soon thoroughly absorbed by this new game. . . . They stretched and stretched, tracing out endless windings through the face, chin, neck, and nape of the neck. They looked like the woolen threads Grandmother unfurled from her distaff at the beginning of winter. Maybe you could darn socks with them, or even pullovers. I was getting very sleepy.

That boyish matter-of-factness is what saves this passage and dozens like it from seeming *ongepotchket*. Thus does Kadare make a virtue of novelistic necessity. The problem, after all, with novels about childhood is that we are sending a man to do a boy's work. Too often we sense that the man is looking over the boy's shoulder and that both feel cramped. One solution is to let the man interpret, as fully and exquisitely as he can, what the boy sees, as Steven

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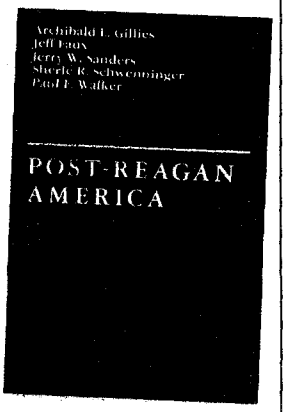

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Millhauser did in his gorgeous *Edwin Mullhouse*. Another is to make the child a sort of preternaturally knowing homunculus, as Günter Grass did in *The Tin Drum*. I think I like Kadare's solution best: to acknowledge that the man is the same person as the boy, or at least (as Shaw is rumored to have said) his nearest living relative, so there is no need to condescend. Reading Kadare (or looking at his photo on the book jacket), one has the feeling that he is not far removed from the curious, reserved, myopic, feverishly impressionable but street-smart and skeptical 6- or 7-year-old at large in the alleys of Gjirokastër. It follows that the city, too, is permitted to remain its old self and is not belittled by a grown-up seeking revenge. Rilke, revisiting Prague, wrote that the city which had once seen itself "fantastically and hugely reflected in him, and treated his heart with haughty and fateful defiance" now seemed ashamed and exposed before him. For Kadare, revisiting his birthplace in the epilogue, Gjirokastër is still "the grey immortal city."

If the city is the hero of this drama, there are two choruses. One is the chorus of old women, *katenxhikas*, who sit on the sofa sipping coffee thick with sugar and rumors. The other is the chorus of teen-age Communists, two in number, who read books and spin globes, watching with grim satisfaction as the iron law of history is fulfilled, and slipping out at night now and then to help it along. Sometimes the two choruses agree, sometimes not. When the city is smitten by an outbreak of magic—Avdo Babaramo's daughter-in-law's milk runs dry, Nazo's newlywed son becomes incapable of performing his conjugal duties, a barrel of cheese explodes—the old women ascribe it to divine wrath. "He may take His time," wheezes Xhexo, "but He never forgets. Yesterday He made Çeço Kaili's daughter grow a beard, tomorrow He will make all our bodies sprout thorns and wires." Down the street, the Communists blame the Fascists, accusing them of milking a collective psychosis to keep the people's minds off their real problems: "Those barbarians with feathers in their hats are happy to resurrect any medieval custom, as long as Mussolini can get something out of it." The most convincing comment, though, comes from the old women: not the *katenxhikas*, this time, but the crones. The crones are somewhat older, in their early and mid-hundreds; they are blind and "very robust, all nerve and bone" and have "long since stopped going out of their houses, for they [find] the world boring." The crones advise that outbreaks of magic usually occur "on the eve of great events, when the spirits flutter like leaves before a storm."

Ominously, the cows and haystacks disappear from the plain across the river and cement mixers roll in. A blackout is enforced. Grandmother slaughters a cock and inspects the shoulder bone. "War," she says in a muffled voice. "The sides of the bone are red. War and blood." "It's crazy, all right," says Kako Pino, the skinny *katenxhika* who decorates the faces of the city's brides with "starlike dots, cypress branches, and signs of the zodiac, all floating in the white mystery of powder." "Barely one wedding a week. The end of the world!" This time the Communists agree, in general. Javer, the more incendiary of the two, learning that the narrator and his pal Ilir have seen sheep slaughtered, laughs and says, "Now you'll see what happens when they slaughter nations."

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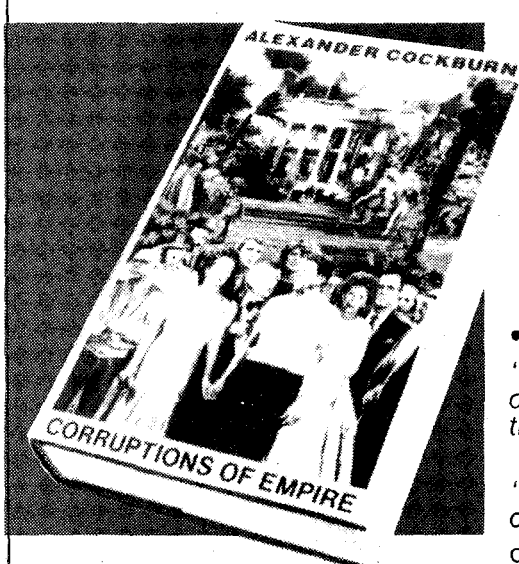

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principle of perpetual motion, it will assure the defense of the city and bring honor to its name. Joyfully Ismail accompanies his grandmother to observe the work in progress. He sees the wooden mock-up and is crushed—can't the bleary-eyed inventor see that the big metal planes will "shatter this little white thing like wolves dismembering a lamb"? Ismail transfers his affections to the wolves—not the British planes that bomb the city but the occupying Italian planes based at the airfield across the river, which shines "as if a thousand Kako Pinos had done its makeup. It breathed heavily, like a hundred lions, and the sound of its panting rose to the sky. A patch of fog hung over it as if dazed." Waiting for his favorite aircraft, an enormous heavy bomber—"my wings, my engine, death at my command"—to return from the front, he falls asleep with his head on the windowsill and wakes up cold as a corpse. "They've hypnotized you," says Grandmother. "Poor kids," says the other chorus, antiphonally. "Fallen in love with war, they have. Terrible."

It is terrible, isn't it, the way little boys seem to love death as much as life, the lifeless as much as the living? In the park, they ignore the trees and gaze open-mouthed at the municipal rack trucks and three-wheeled Cushmans. But the knack of animating the inanimate has its points. The first music may have come when a child struck a stone. And literature: What could be more dead than letters, or more alive than their combinations? When Ismail borrows a book, *Macbeth*, from Javer, he reads until his mother puts out the kerosene lamp, then lies awake pondering the strangeness of it:

> Between two cardboard covers were noises, doors, howls, horses, people. . . . Boiled down to little black marks. . . . The letters run in mad haste, now here, now there. The *a*'s, *f*'s, *y*'s, *k*'s all run. They gather together to create a horse or a hailstorm. They run again. Now they create a dagger, a night, a murder. Then streets, slamming doors, silence. Running and running. Never stopping.

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> Who are you then? How come you don't know the birds, haystacks, or trees? Where do you come from?
>
> We come from that city over there. What we know is stone. They're like people, stones are: they're young or old, hard or soft, polished or rough, sharp, pink and covered with pores, striated with veins, sly or dependable enough to hold your foot when you slip, faithless, glad at your misfortunes, faithful, remaining on duty in foundations for centuries . . .
>
> Are you serious or crazy, or what?
>
> And now, just like people, they're splattered with blood by the war.
>
> What a city, what a city.
>
> We're dying to go back there. □

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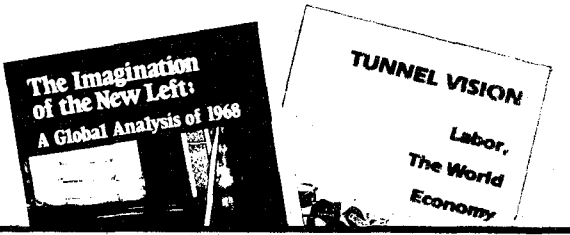

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SYLVIA PLATH, A BIOGRAPHY. *By Linda Wagner-Martin. Simon and Schuster. 282 pp. $18.95.*

Not everyone is still an adolescent at college or during the first childbearing years. The Sylvia Plath of this biography mostly was: all preface, all expectation, preoccupied with her body, an identity still in the crucible.

Denied permission to quote at length from Plath's writing, Linda Wagner-Martin approaches Plath more or less sociologically. In this she has had Plath's own full cooperation. Erik Erikson called adolescence the Age of Ideology; Plath's most popular writing, focused on adolescence, provides a convenient index of the ideologies that formed her in postwar America. The work by which Plath is best known to her very large audience is the autobiographical account in *The Bell Jar* of a summer spent as college editor of *Mademoiselle*. (Wagner-Martin says that 80,000 to 100,000 copies of *The Bell Jar* sell annually in the United States.) Later, publication of Plath's college journals and her letters home from England to her mother and brother augmented the novel's callowest tones. But shortly after the pseudonymous publication of *The Bell Jar* Plath committed suicide, at age 30. Then began the slow release of an entirely different level of work: poetry written from 1961 through early 1963, the last two years of her life. "I am a genius of a writer," she had exulted in a letter home, around the time of her thirtieth birthday. "I am writing the best poems of my life; they will make my name."

Plath's reputation for genius, however, was entirely posthumous. When her first book of poems, *The Colossus*, came out in 1960, notices were favorable but contained the reservation that she had not yet developed a consistent voice. She was then at work on *The Bell Jar* and poems she described as full of "humor and oddnesses." Just attaining professional status as a writer, Plath aspired to reach the same readers as Philip Roth and J.D. Salinger. Salinger's "Seymour: An Introduction" had appeared in *The New Yorker* the preceding spring. Plath noted in her journal that she read Salinger's novella "increasingly enchanted," and then had fallen asleep to dream of finding a story of her own in the same magazine, the title printed "in the deeply endearing *New Yorker*–heading type, rather like painstakingly inked hand-lettering."

Salinger's successful formula was the first-person narrative in which a quintessentially adolescent hero counters the gray-flannel world of benign, deadly grown-ups first with whimsy and then with mental breakdown or suicide. As Wagner-Martin demonstrates, Plath borrowed from Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* with surprising frequency in plotting *The Bell Jar*: She "turned to it for structure, and drew on it whenever she ran out of events that seemed to fit [the protagonist] Esther's story."

Humor and oddness were the traits that made stories marketable in Plath's view, and she worked diligently to master a comic tone like Salinger's; she yearned for sales to commercial magazines, and recognized the appeal of adolescent pathos. To her journals Plath could confide, "In the morning light, all is possible; even becoming a god." But her strategies for publication indicate that, for a genius, she set her sights low. "I shall have fulfilled a very long-time ambition if a story of mine ever makes the L[adies] H[ome] J[ournal]," she wrote her mother from England in October 1961.

The apparent contradiction between Plath's grand confidence and her bread-and-butter professional expectations has something to do with the fact that as a woman of her time, she had another project: fulfillment as a wife. At age 24 she had married a mentor, the British poet Ted Hughes, two years her senior. The first four years of marriage were a perpetual private workshop, supported mainly by Plath's grants, teaching and part-time jobs. Hughes was writing full-time, with a sense of vocation she could not approach. For Plath, being Hughes's wife was a vocation in itself. Wagner-Martin characterizes as "almost obsessive" her "need to live the perfect life, love the perfect man, create the perfect household, as a means of proving that she was a success in all the areas women

Diane Middlebrook teaches at Stanford University. She is writing the biography of the poet Anne Sexton.

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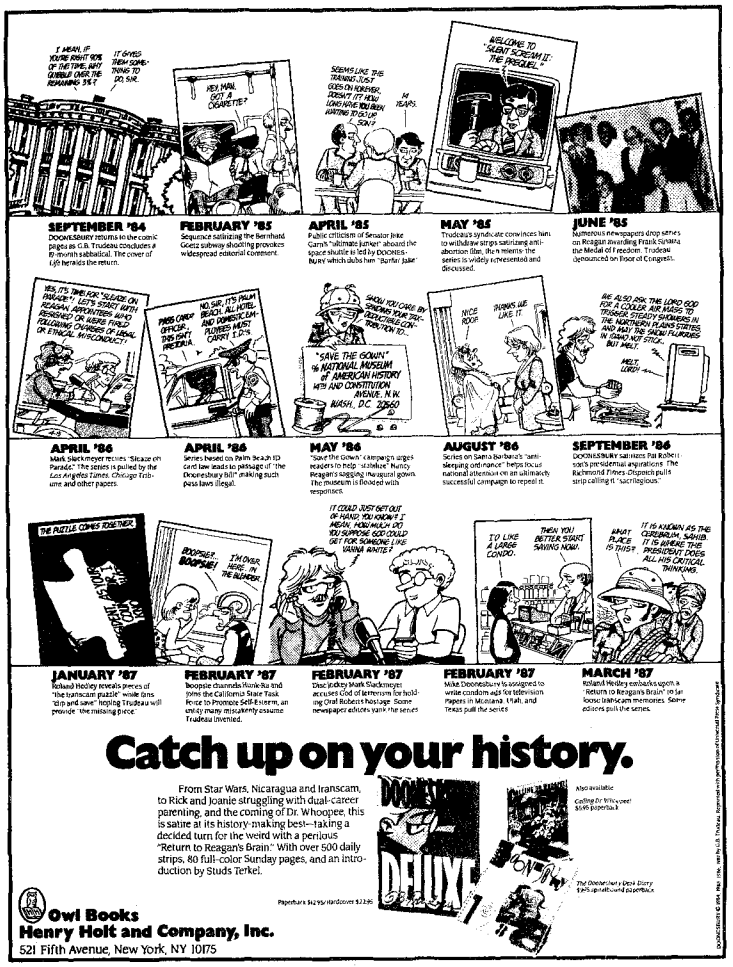
SEPTEMBER '84
DOONESBURY returns to the comic pages as G.B. Trudeau conducts a 10-month sabbatical. The cover of Life heralds the return.
FEBRUARY '85
Sequence satirizing the Bernhard Goetz subway shooting provokes widespread editorial comment.
APRIL '85
Public criticism of Senator Jake Garn's "ultimate junket" aboard the space shuttle is led by Doonesbury which dubs him "Buffalo Jake"
MAY '85
Trudeau's syndicate convinces him to withdraw strips satirizing anti-abortion fliers. Run's interim: the series is widely represented and discussed.
JUNE '85
Numerous newspapers drop series on Reagan awarding Frank Sinatra the Medal of Freedom. Trudeau denounced on floor of Congress.
APRIL '86
Mark Slackmeyer recites "Silicon on Parade." The series is pulled by the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune and other papers.
APRIL '86
Series based on Palm Beach ID card law leads to passage of "the Doonesbury Bill" making such pass laws illegal.
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FEBRUARY '87
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FEBRUARY '87
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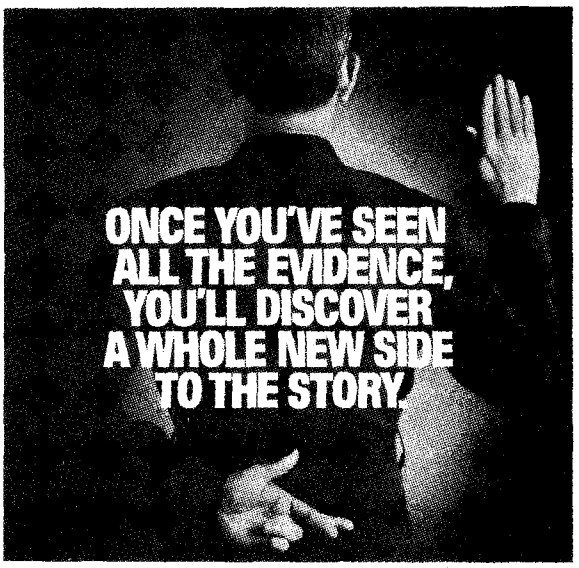

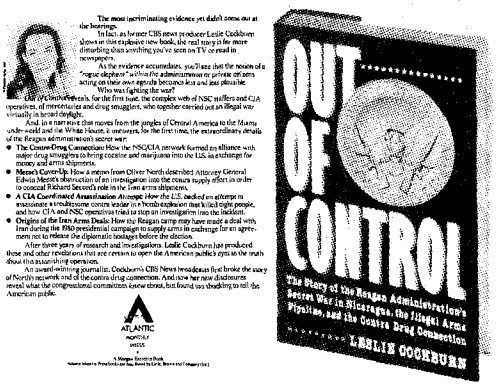
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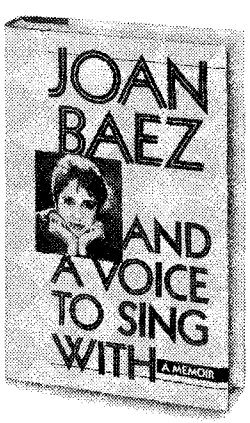

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were supposed to excel in." Thus while her training as a writer went forward under Hughes's guidance and strong encouragement, her development as an "ideal woman" decelerated under the burdens of chronic financial worries, infant care and, at last, Hughes's infidelities.

Sexual ideologies play a crucial role in the plot of the story Wagner-Martin tells. Plath met Hughes in bohemian Cambridge, at a literary party Plath described in her journal as one of "these sluttish nights" that "make me have a violent nunlike passion to write and sequester myself." Not long after meeting, they began kissing—Hughes ripped off Plath's hairband and earrings; Plath bit him until blood ran down his face. Plath was no longer a virgin, but she had cordoned off her sexuality with a concept: Sex was an instinctual force running through her, driving her toward men who could return her passion and father her children. (Plath described Hughes to her mother as "the strongest man in the world, ex-Cambridge, brilliant poet whose work I loved before I met him, a large, hulking, healthy Adam.") In her journal she tried out the possibility that her violent sexual feelings might be most useful if sublimated in writing. Once married, she made Hughes the focus of a rather savage will to domesticate them both.

The marriage collapsed just as Plath was gaining recognition in London's literary establishment. This time her violent passions—jealousy, and terror of being abandoned—did get sublimated into writing, having few other outlets. In the mythy poetry Plath wrote during the last bitter months before her suicide, male figures are typically based on an imago of Daddy, beheld with vengeful fascination.

So far Plath represents the late-adolescent female of American culture in the 1950s: a talented young woman deformed by ideologies that segregated masculine and feminine roles while sponsoring ambition. But what about her genius? Wagner-Martin's biography does not help much in illuminating that. Most sorely missing is an analysis of Plath as an artist: Since she is unable to quote at length from the work, Wagner-Martin is able to gesture toward this subject only through paraphrase. Plath became a masterful technician of syllables during her college years, but her genius expressed itself in the extreme condensation of her last poems. No paraphrase can even get close to rendering the layered meanings Plath achieved through juxtaposition and leaps of association in these poems; indeed, paraphrase succeeds only in making them sound banal.

Moreover, Plath's own writing is so autobiographical that any secondary account of it is likely to pale by comparison. Her postcollege journal, like the letters of John Keats, is genius talking to itself. Here, and never in letters home, she stretches toward artistic goals still slightly out of reach; she lets thought snake into metaphors that tell much about the feeling-tone of insights. Only a full publication of Plath's last journals could account for the central mystery of this life at its most interesting: the relationship between the drive for conformity and the drive for originality that Plath negotiated day by day as she neared thirty.

Wagner-Martin has had to confine herself instead to portraying Plath as an exemplar of all that could go wrong or right for a daughter coming of age in the 1950s. This Sylvia Plath lived her life "as though it were some blueprint for a woman's fantasy." But the strength of Wagner-Martin's book is

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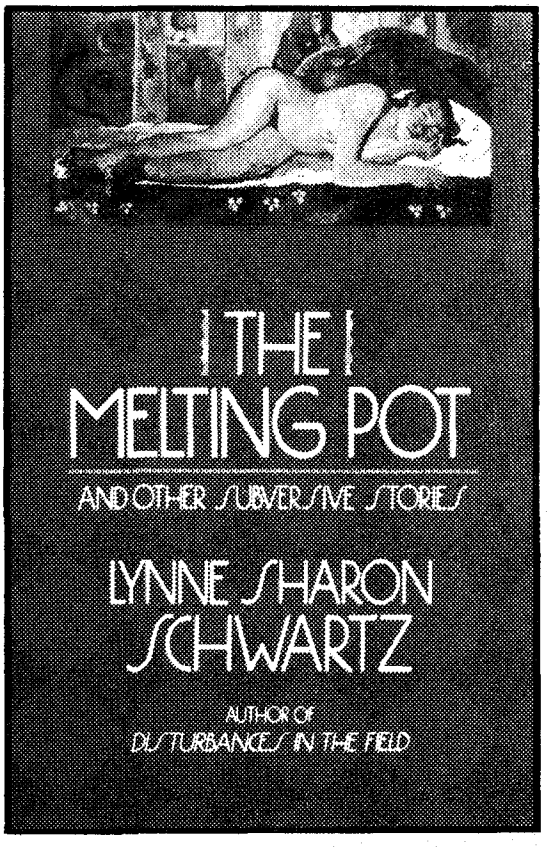

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just such sociological consistency. It earns credibility for the insight with which she accounts for Plath's suicide: By February 1963, Plath had come to the end of the fantasy. "Moving to London had not brought her reconciliation with Ted, or professional acclaim, or new friendships," Wagner-Martin observes. "She was becoming depressed, partly with the realization of what faced her: She would live as a single parent, with these two wonderful children, for the rest of her days. Though she did not say it, she would live the life her own mother had led, a life that Sylvia had often criticized for its self-sacrifice and dedication."

Plath's very last poems, written the week of her death, blaze with renunciation not of genius but of ordinary life. Was this choice neurotic? Was it simply pathetic, or was it tragic? The published documents do not agree. For now, it is harder to capture Plath through a biography than to quicken her presence by reading the journals and poems. □

NEW YEAR'S DAY

That pumpkin lodged at the edge of the yard,
what hand has bitten out its heart,
tracking a gold of seeds
into the house?

I gather the children loosed from their parents,
homework, family visits, the aimless ones
flickering the place like birds.
Which one? They squeal

for this game, blameless, inventing answers.
I think of the morning light swept
through a door, now thrown back
as if the sun cares nothing for labor.

Labor is what these children forgive, the horrible
days of fracture and veinburst, a father
who can't remember how to play, but
suffered, reduced to a man

who didn't see and didn't foretell the black dog.
History, with your tail slung low, ears flat,
is it you again disemboweling all
we can't bear to abandon?

Why does the sun seem to love you best of these
faces empty as the grass, the bits
of leaves in their hair. Mother
thought she drove you off

with the Daisy pump, but she's gone, hands up
in something like a pledge of fear
mean you're back. Nobody talks
exactly, but garbage does.

Wind down the alley whirls the scraps that snarl.
I'm watching over their heads, thinking rot
must come in each orange heart, seeds
fall and dry and send up

hands more precious because unlabored for, gifts.
Still New Year's resolutions are in me.
I'm cocked like a hen with a brood
playing in garbage, spoiling.

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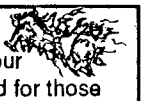

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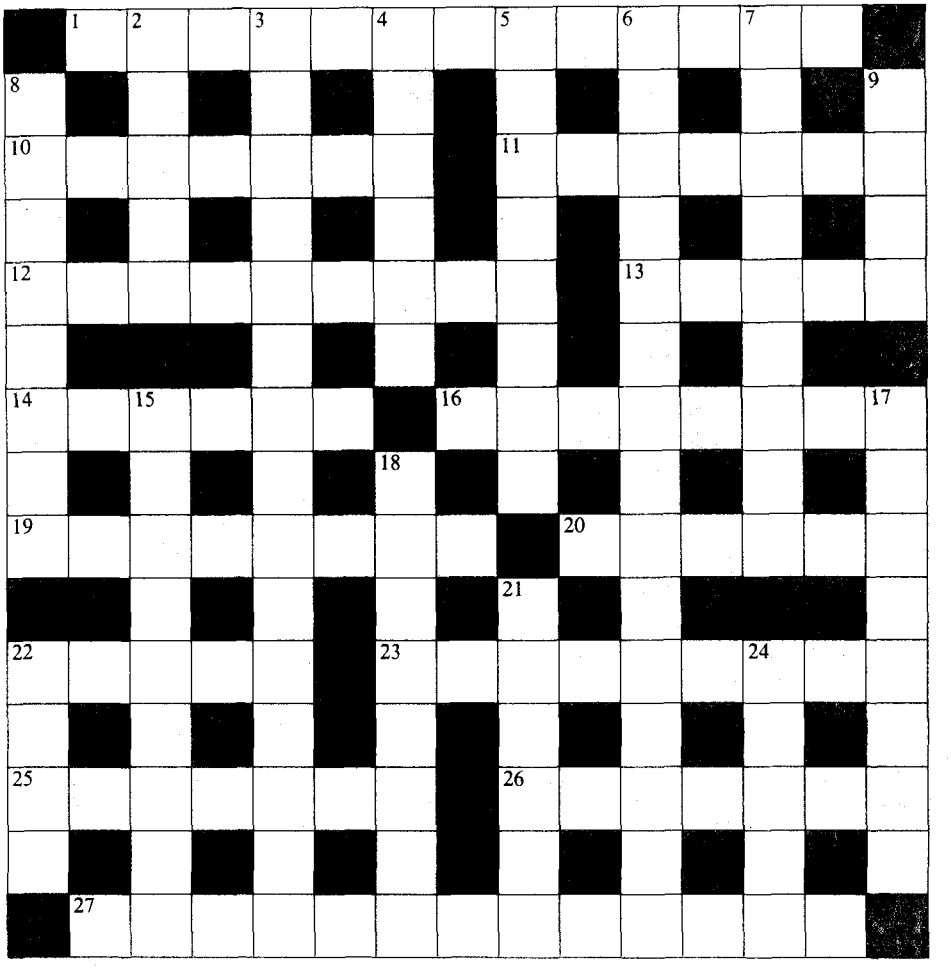

ACROSS

1 When they first came to the region of 27, did they steal dogs from automobiles to get such a reputation? (13)
10 Sort of bright, but it's around the worst grade possible. (No good tar should be found in it.) (3,4)
11 Go miles the wrong way, and where will you end up? China—all the way from France. (7)
12 Mistakenly name the Po, but more properly name the Nile as a likely spot to have once seen him. (9)
13 Placed in a position that sounds as though it might be seen. (5)
14 Take me back to your leader, as you might call him! (You might have raised work, if you do.) (6)
16 I'll be there first, if I take the highway, evidently. (8)
19 The literary makeup of Noyes? Well, perhaps—and perhaps not. (3,3,2)
20 If you do, the city might be surrounded, or you might make some money. (6)
22 Descend from one's level of dignity by the front door of the house in certain East Coast cities. (5)
23 A variety of giant mice, which may be hard to understand. (9)
25 It isn't easy to lose such a battle, either. (4-3)
26 An understanding of convenient enterprise? (7)
27 Should her nickname be "Redd"? (A proper butler wouldn't put up with her, finally.) (8,5)

DOWN

2 Does the poplar suggest Mr. Lincoln to the French? (5)
3 Buying political influence? (It's a way of measuring what your salary gives you.) (10,5)
4 Obviously not loose garments. (6)
5 Sort of palls when common jewelry is put on—suggesting a rather sharp combination. (8)
6 The final court ball may proclaim it. (Something one might hunt gets fixed, as well as light.) (4,3,3,5)
7 It's proper to dial the army command! (5,4)
8 A clever plan takes get-up when a homeless animal comes around. (8)
9 We objectively find a rising of the French something other than new! (4)
15 See, as part of the job, I shop—richly rewarded! (9)
17 What people like Sherlock did, being found out. (8)
18 The insect that appears first—the half-size type, not Scottish—has a pair of them. (8)
21 What some corporations are urged to do in Africa as part of a stand I've stood for? (6)
22 A section of London or New York is so hot at first! (4)
24 May be part of a quartet, if you get the drift! (5)

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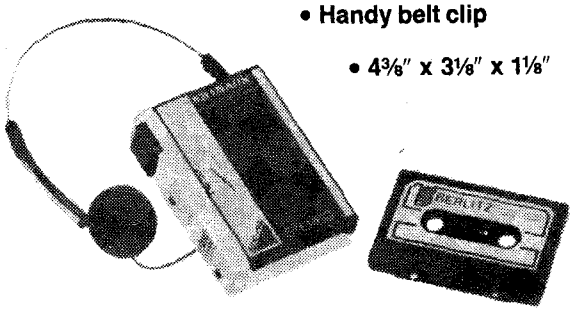

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